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ABSTRACT

This publication presents a series of papers on the role of the university world wide in advancing universal literacy. Chapter 1 looks across the Asian and Pacific Region and shows the large regional disparities which exist in addressing literacy issues at the university level. The second chapter describes the magnitude of illiteracy in the Caribbean and the regional character of the University of the West Indies with its strengths and limitations in the expansion of literacy provisions. Chapter 3 provides a critical discussion of the context in which adult literacy is addressed in North America. The fourth chapter contains an account of the great need for universities in the Arab States to address all of the areas in which they might contribute to literacy. The fifth chapter discusses the advances made by African universities in responding to their social service responsibilities as well as periods and instances when literacy has received a low priority. The final two chapters provide personal perspectives on specific literacy related topics. One article reflects on attitudes towards adult learners' writing and its place in the academy, and the other addresses the broader issue of literacy in the university and the international economic order. (JB)

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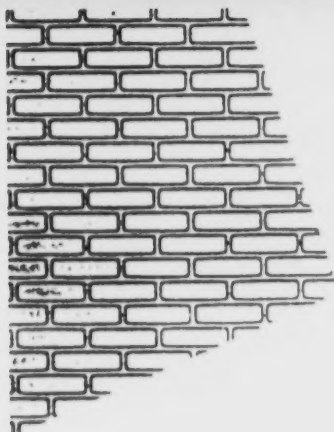
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PREFACE

International Literacy Year 1990 provided an opportunity to renew commitments to ensuring a fully literate world. The two principal messages of the Year were: (a) that literacy matters and that it matters greatly and (b) that the provision of education is, above all, a public responsibility but that there is a role for everyone and, regarding the purpose of this volume, for the university, in ensuring this basic human right. Basic literacy and numeracy may not constitute in and of themselves a guarantee to a better quality of life for all but they are definitely a crucial part of individual development and social participation.

At present, more than 965 million adults in the world have no access to the written word. More than 130 million children of school-age have never seen the inside of a classroom. In addition, the quality of schooling has been seriously compromised over the past fifteen years due to the ongoing economic crisis. In the changing world political climate, it is more than ever urgent to place education amongst national priorities. In order to do so, it is necessary to examine the contribution that might and should be made by every level and form of education.

In this context, UNESCO's International Literacy Year Secretariat and its Division of Higher Education and Research jointly organized a roundtable on the theme, "Literacy and the Role of the University" during the International Conference on Education held in Geneva, 3-8 September 1990. This roundtable brought together university specialists from all regions of the world as well as the UNESCO-NGO Collective Consultation on Higher Education, the UNESCO-NGO Collective Consultation on Literacy, the Director of the International Bureau of Education and interested delegates at-

tending the Conference. Because of the enormous interest generated by this modest roundtable, a Report of the Proceedings has already been made available and now, I am pleased to introduce a collection of the papers presented by the specialists as well as written contributions provided by participants.

The roundtable quite intentionally focussed on the university in order to generate an international debate concerning the specificity of that form of higher education. Experts were invited to examine the role of universities in: (a) university-based teacher training; (b) research and training on the teaching of reading, writing and numeracy for all age groups; (c) multi-disciplinary research on literacy, from the sociological to the linguist or anthropological dimensions and (d) actual service and delivery of adult literacy programmes and training for tutors/instructors in that field through continuing education or university extension activities. It would be fair to state that a fully-fledged university commitment to literacy would involve addressing all four of these elements.

Where do we stand worldwide? Although the following chapters do not provide an exhaustive inventory of university practice, nor a consensus concerning what ought to be the case, they do take us one step further in defining ways in which this form of higher education may use its specificity to promote a fully literate world in which "basic education for all" is more than a vision beyond the grasp of the vast majority of the world's population.

Colin N. Power

Assistant Director-General for Education

INTRODUCTION

This volume looks critically at the role universities have played worldwide in the promotion of universal literacy. Universities the world over have waxed hot and cold over the degree of commitment they should appropriately attach to this role. In some countries, the university already attaches only second-class status to its faculty of education, education being perceived as a less noble endeavour than the social or natural sciences. In other countries, it is not considered appropriate to engage in teacher-training at university level. In these countries, teacher-training occurs primarily in special colleges or training institutions. Furthermore, teacher-training is only seriously addressed for primary level. Secondary school teachers frequently enter classrooms with virtually no pedagogical preparation. Other universities do indeed include all elements of a fully-fledged commitment to literacy: **research** on literacy acquisition, the teaching of reading and writing, achievement measurement and assessment, languages of instruction and equality of opportunity; **teacher training** in the preparation of specialists and tutors, appropriate adult learning methods, policy and reform for second chance opportunities, the link between adult literacy and professional prospects; **out-reach and extension programmes in adult literacy and basic education provided directly by universities.**

The roundtable upon which this collection of papers is based brought together university-based specialists from all regions of the world already directly involved in at least one of the above dimensions. Furthermore, representatives of non-governmental organisations concerned with higher education and literacy participated fully in the debate. We are pleased to include the written contributions provided by some of them. Such was the enthusiasm for the topic that a resolution concerning the university and literacy was developed and approved. It is also included in this volume. Finally, excerpts from the Report of Proceedings are included to give some idea of the issues raised during discussion.

The authors of the following chapters have responded positively to our request that they look at the situation in their regions or countries critically. Thus, this volume does not invite complacency nor self-congratulations. It does not rank countries or regions as to their commitment to address literacy-related issues at university level. It does, however, provide a frank discussion of progress and obstacles as they have arisen in specific contexts. Much of this experience can be shared across countries and regions. Most countries are constantly grappling with the thorny issue of the university's social responsibility in both developing and

industrialized nations. Literacy is easily the key area in which universities might express that responsibility. In other words, universities may continue a social reproduction function or they may set standards through research, teacher training and direct service to promote more democratic societies.

In Chapter I, Professor Brendan Bartlett of Griffith University in Australia, looks across the Asia and Pacific Region and shows the disparities which exist in addressing literacy issues at university level. The enormous regional disparities are certainly partially accountable for universities' limited attention to the magnitude of illiteracy. It should be recalled that South Asia contains the largest number of illiterates in the world, although Africa contains the largest number of countries with high illiteracy rates. Professor Desmond Clarke of the University of the West Indies, Barbados, also describes the magnitude of illiteracy in the Caribbean. The regional character of the University of the West Indies has both strengths and limitations in the expansion of literacy provision.

In Chapter III, Professor Richard Darville of Carleton University, Canada, provides a critical discussion of the context in which adult literacy is addressed in North America. Dr. Abdalla Bultana of UNESCO's regional office for the Arab States (UNEDBAS) provides a frank account of the enormous need for universities in this region to begin to address all of the areas in which they might contribute to literacy. Finally, Professor Michael Omolewa of the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, discusses the advances made by African universities in responding to their social service responsibilities as well as periods and instances when literacy has received a low priority. Two final chapters provide personal perspectives on specific literacy-related topics. Jane Mace of Goldsmith College, the United Kingdom, who has a longstanding

concern for adult literacy reflects on attitudes towards adult learners' writing and its place in the academy. Ettore Gelpi of UNESCO, an expert in lifelong learning, addresses the broader issue of literacy, the university and the international economic order.

Taken together, these contributions raise more questions than they answer. Indeed, that was our intention. International Literacy Year provided an opportunity to draw the attention, not only of those teachers and learners already engaged nor to create a general sense of awareness of the importance of literacy but, rather, to identify further actors who could make a contribution to the development of a fully literate world. Indeed, awareness-raising in and of itself can be self-defeating. Large-scale awareness of problems without the sustained means to solve them can only lead to further frustration and dissatisfaction. In the case of literacy, children and adults alike whose hopes have been raised, but who find no possibilities for learning, are unlikely to come forward a second time. The university is one such potential actor which urgently needs to define its role.

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LITERACY AND THE UNIVERSITY

IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

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from tiny missions in the Antarctic to the massive population centres of the Asian continent and subcontinent, peoples of the Asia and Pacific region are socialized into a multitude of cultures, religions, languages and political groupings. The region contains UNESCO's largest Member State, and its smallest. The dispersion of the island peoples of the Pacific is extraordinary as is the range of languages found within quite confined spaces. It has nations which are amongst the world's most technologically advanced and others which have struggled for some time to provide the most fundamental and sustaining of goods and services for their citizens. Its 31 Member States include many for which basic education is universal and fundamental literacy is expected of all individuals. And, they include others where neither condition prevails. It is a region in which two-thirds of the 948 million people of the world considered to be illiterate reside (UNESCO, 1990).

The capacity of universities here to describe, explain and actively confront the situation of widespread illiteracy throughout the region is untested and what history of intervention universities might have had is uncharted as a collective piece. Evidence of this fragmentary knowledge was provided by UNESCO's Principal Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (PROAP) in response to a request for information "...We do not have any systematic documentation on their (universities') involvement in literacy work. Even if we wish to have, it is not possible. What you would find are fragments of information." The National Institute of Educational Research in Japan has remained silent in response to the same query, presumably for the same reason.

This condition precludes a representative position being developed in this chapter. The patchwork presented may understate the positive input to literacy from the massive majority of institutions about which the author knows nothing at all. The condition also illustrates a major difficulty in any argument which assumes universities within a region to be a collective property. The difficulty is that they are not. For most purposes, and in most fields of endeavour, universities act singularly. The variety in socio-political contexts in which they operate is associated with this independence as is a belief held by many within the system itself that the traditional independence of institutions is an inviolate tenet of university operation.

Current position

In matters of literacy expansion, there has been no regional position to which universities have contributed or to which they currently subscribe. Nor has there been a strategic plan by which their intellectual and social power could be brought to bear in a coordinated, cooperative and concentrated way. Nor is there any indication that either of these actions would be taken by universities even if a context were in place for such agreement and effort. In this respect, we really have not tested the capacity of our university sector to be more than a marginal participant in advancing literacy on a widespread basis.

However, as a result of a UNESCO initiative at Jomtien in March 1990, followed by a sub-regional meeting in Darwin (October 1990), a framework has been provided by which national plans might be developed throughout the region to achieve basic education for all. This action includes development of plans for literacy expansion. This high level initiative has now to filter to various institutions involved in the educational enterprise of nations and sub-regional groupings. This is a positive and powerful step along the road to wider realization of the utility of literacy and the identification of national needs, resources, objectives and action methodologies relating to its wider acquisition. It remains for us now to ask whether and how the university sector should take a more prominent role in developing such national plans and helping in their implementation.

Uncertainty about university involvement

That we should need to ask such questions is perhaps a reflection of the orthodoxy of operation found throughout universities of the world. Generally speaking, most are similar in ethos and output, particularly in relation to education. Matters such as where a university's work lies and how responsible to societal press its mission should be, may be answered more often against an institution's beliefs about academic traditions and their preservation than against its commitment to academic principles and their adaptive application.

In this sense an orthodoxy is preserved. As universities have spread throughout the world, a failure to localize needs and issues and to respond to them has extended the orthodoxy. This seems to have been the case throughout Asia and the Pacific. In reflecting on the extent to which education systems mirror the diversity of nations, Jones (1989) spoke of the great difficulty in finding

"...in both developed and developing countries, examples of universities that have slavishly followed an externally-derived notion of what a university should be. Very often the academic structure and capital plant is a copy of a "model" university elsewhere. It resembles a university, but perhaps is a bastion of elitism and irrelevancies" (p. 3).

And, this is the major problem. It is not so much that orthodoxy itself is undesirable but that any obsession with its preservation may subvert the great strengths of the academy from matters of real concern in the communities which have established and supported a university sector.

Seemingly, universities of the region should be highly involved in sorting out any question of their participation. By understanding and being part of their social contexts at

local, national and regional levels, by developing learning and teaching structures and technologies, and by coordinating with other agencies of change, universities could facilitate widespread literacy development, functional in its applications and lasting and reinforcing in its effects.

Yet, it is not clear that universities have considered this role. In fact, there are several indications that many do not see literacy and numeracy as a legitimate focus for their work.

In Australia, for example, the federal government felt compelled in recent times to step in with clearly-designated funding incentives for universities and colleges generally to rethink their purposes in terms of public responsibility. This affected the higher education sector in many ways, but it is yet to be seen to what extent universities have detected literacy as a priority issue demanding of research and development in Australian society. In August 1990 the executive officers of the Vice-Chancellors Committee of Australia and New Zealand indicated that neither committee had discussed literacy in the contexts of their respective societies and possibilities for participation by their institutions. Yet, there have been clear signals in each country of growing public awareness of literacy problems and of considerable national concern that these problems be addressed.

Perhaps it is not so much that deliberate decisions have been made to ignore literacy and numeracy as issues before the university communities. Rather, the capacity of universities to see these as issues and to cope with their challenges is more likely to be a function of two things. The first is whether they have recognized, or are prepared to recognize, that rapid and often dramatic changes in their own and other societies are relevant to the university mission and work, and if so, whether literacy is seen as an enabling condition for keeping pace with such changes. The second is, whether having made such recognition, there are sufficient resources available to them to conduct their work in the identified area.

There have been clear signs that communities throughout the region have signalled problems and issues involving literacy and/or its social and economic relationships, and also their intentions or resolve to address these matters. Several of these issues are presented in the following section. Universities must recognize they can and will play a part in this action. Failure to do so will imperil the university institution in a time when resources at national, sub-regional and regional levels are subject to increasing tensions concerning world trade and emerging blocs. Such tensions increase the rigour with which externally-placed demands are made of the institution and social responsibility becomes a more obvious dimension when institutional policy and action are monitored.

Allied to this issue is the need for communities to support their resolve concerning literacy expansion with the funding allocations necessary for their universities to make active and meaningful contributions. Rhetoric alone is not enough to encourage an aggressive response from those universities which recognize their responsibilities to act.

Additionally, it is important to remember that universities are themselves communities of people. The decision-makers amongst administrators and academics also have different opinions of just how flexible the university mission should be. Whereas several initiatives in our region, including some of those mentioned later in this chapter, were conceived by one or a number of academics within an institution. Support by way of resource allocation was also provided. This is not always the case and it is conceivable that our universities are filled with as many academics whose ideas for realistic and achievable involvement in literacy research, programme development or training have been frustrated

through lack of support within the institution, as those who have suffered from failure of communities to resource their institutions.

The signs of yesterday's recognition and today's problems

Certainly, the university and literacy are old companions, the origins of the one steeped in the workings of the other. The traditional universities are signposted with marks of this relationship. "Man (Person) of Letters", "Reader", "Reading in ..." are terms which have long been part of the development of the academic and structural character or culture of the university.

But, the traditions behind the literacy metaphor have not filtered through to the social consciousness of the university sector to any marked degree. Our students who are to be medical doctors and pharmacists learn nothing about the capacities of their patients to read dosage instructions, to understand and record arrangements for care, to read thermometers or to sift through labelling of the constituents of packaged medications. Those who will be engineers are left to assume literacy in users of their buildings, bridges, transport systems and the like. And so it goes for every faculty of our universities. The literate who are preparing to have such impact on their societies are being denied the reflection and knowledge-building about illiteracy which might strengthen their views of themselves and of their societies and heighten the influence and effects of their preparation.

As for the wider community, our traditional universities have not extended the thinking and learning behind their traditions into systematic analyses of continuing problems of illiteracy, problems concerning new challenges to functional literacy, and problems associated with their own role in advancing the effective participation of people in communities from which the universities themselves have arisen. In Australia, much has been left to the Technical and Further Education sector (TAFE) in this regard. In New Zealand, it has been the Polytechnic system, particularly the Adult Reading and Learning Assistance Federations which have been active in this area. If the universities are to adopt a more obvious profile, the spirit behind the traditional terms needs to reappear pragmatically in meanings which are descriptive of needs in local communities and with a commitment to addressing those needs through understanding, research and teaching.

Illiteracy is easily presented as a critical issue common to the many societies of Asia and the Pacific and relevant to the cultures which have established and maintained universities as part of their societal fabric. Basic literacy is more a problem in developing nations (Apelis, 1986; Jizawa, 1990; UNESCO, 1989, 1990). However, both developed and developing countries have also to contend with functional illiteracy and its pervasive effects for individuals and societies. In relation to my own country, statements reflecting this concern were made during 1990 by very public figures, viz.

"This country can't afford to have one million adults unable to perform fairly basic tasks ... it's a question of economic common sense" (Bill Hayden, Governor-General of Australia, 1 February 1990).

"Adult illiteracy in Australia is costing the nation at least \$3.2 billion a year in lost productivity and is promoting and cementing social and economic inequality" (John Dawkins, Minister for Employment, Education and Training, May 1990).

"On the occasion of International Literacy Day in International Literacy Year I call on the nation to work together for literacy development. Our future depends on becoming a clever country. No educational skill is more fundamental than literacy" (Bob Hawke, Prime Minister of Australia, 7 September 1990).

These statements refer typically to losses at national and individual levels which are associated with illiteracy. The Prime Minister continued his statement with propositions that the education sector should not be seen as the only change agent and that those of our institutions working for literacy should look beyond the territorial markers often associated with such care and attention:

"We all have a part to play in literacy development. Responsibility lies not only with the education sector but also with parents, community groups and industry. Australia will also play its part in assisting with literacy development in those regions of the world faced with greater difficulties than our own" (Bob Hawke, Prime Minister of Australia, 7 September 1990).

Basic literacy and numeracy are crucial for individual development and social participation. However, it is development and participation in a world which often confuses the goal status of these functions by basing formal and informal systems of education on the incorrect notion that useful and lasting literacy and numeracy can be achieved in isolation from the social contexts in which they operate.

This confusion has significant consequences. In developed countries we are faced with increasing evidence of the superficiality of literacy levels achieved by large sections of communities.

Australia's functional illiteracy problem has been estimated at 20-25 per cent of its adult population (Singh, 1989; Wickert, 1989) and many of its academics point to the insufficiency of basic literacy skills for providing critical, adaptive citizens (de Castell & Luke, 1987; Singh, 1988).

In developing countries the spiral of literacy development is consistently swamped by those of population growth, poverty, and problematic subsistence and health. For example, the government of Papua New Guinea as part of its National Literacy and Awareness Programme (1990) has set as an objective, a 2 per cent annual reduction of its illiteracy rate (54.5 per cent - 1985 estimate) across the next seven years. However with the population growth estimated at 2.8 per cent (Apelis, 1988), the success of this intention is confronted immediately.

University participation: a regional perspective

For more than 600 million people in the Asia and Pacific region (Jizawa, 1990; UNESCO, 1990) the literacy crisis is one of first mastering basic skills. For unknown millions of others who have at sometime mastered such skills, the crisis is in maintaining them or in developing a critical usage from which to conceptualize and reflect on their lives and their worlds.

Those without basic skills are disproportionately represented in the developing countries of the region. Yet basic skills do not guarantee functional literacy, and in both

developed and developing nations the problem of recidity is a significant one. Nor does functional literacy extend automatically to uses of text for obtaining and conveying information for other than immediate practical needs, or for developing one's own thinking and strength in constructing knowledge, for escaping into fantasy, or for exploring the otherwise unreachable. If there are no books to read or no willingness to do so, if there is no purpose to write or audience for one's materials, if there is no desire to change from traditional or practiced methods of communication, then basic skills will not be extended. In most cases they will be lost.

The research, teaching and training missions of the university must be responsive to the relationship between social illiteracy and functional literacy. If they are not, any contribution made from the university sector to initiatives in establishing the fundamental skills of literacy will be diminished by the "neo-illiterate" regression (Tohme, 1990) which is associated with lack of opportunity to use one's skills or an elective failure to do so. Contributions in areas where there is a significant non-print tradition will be particularly subject to this attrition if provision is not made for post-literacy confirmation. If the assembled research and teaching power of the sector did nothing more than to remind literacy workers in the field of the primacy of literacy in use for establishing, maintaining and extending individual achievement, and to assist in finding ways to keep literacy learning relevant to the functional, informational and epistemic needs of people - it will have made a significant contribution.

However, against a diversity of extreme scale in the languages, population concentrations, religions, cultures, economics and politics of Asia and the Pacific, there have been some outstanding achievements made. Some of these have resulted from cooperative initiatives amongst universities. For example, a pilot project for what has developed as a massive, basic literacy acquisition programme in rural Thailand affecting more than two million children was designed, implemented and researched jointly by Srinakharinwirot (Prasarnmit Campus), Thailand, and the Brisbane College of Advanced Education (Mt Gravatt Campus), now part of Griffith University, Australia.

The pilot study was relatively inexpensive. Each university met the salary costs of its researchers, and air-fares of the Australians were paid for the initial visit by the Australian institution in one case and by one of the researchers in the other. Accommodation and travel costs in Thailand along with costs for producing basic materials used in the study were met by "friends" of Srinakharinwirot - individuals or corporations with some involvement with the campus. The study enabled demonstration and practice of an experiential methodology for learning in a second language in the Srinakharinwirot demonstration school in Bangkok. With funding support from Rotary International, this was subsequently extended to use in the rural province of Surin where many students in the targeted schools had a mother-tongue language different from Thai, the language of instruction. The success of these applications has resulted in a large scale project, funded by Rotary International (under its 3H Programme), the first literacy education project ever funded by this organization.

A second project involving a multi-national network of universities is the Melanesian Literacy Project. Its design involved input from a variety of government and non-government organizations in Australia, Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea and academics from universities in Australia, Papua New Guinea and the South Pacific and the Solomon Islands Teachers College. This project, now overseen by a Council of Ministers of Education from Melanesia, coordinates several distinctive initiatives in each country includ-

ing the development of a national literacy policy in Vanuatu and implementation of an alternative literacy learning programme for out-of-school youth in the Solomon Islands.

Other achievements have been those of single institutions such as the extension of access opportunities in adult education resulting from the work in distance education conducted by the University of the South Pacific across the widely-spaced population pockets in the island communities of the South Pacific, or by the King Mongkut Institute of Technology in extension education for students spread throughout Thailand. Similar, innovative thinking at the University of Waikato in New Zealand has provided courses for target groups which have had limited educational background from which to prepare for higher education, and/or for those disproportionately represented in the illiteracy statistics of this highly-literate nation. Its certificate courses for women, for Maori citizens and for those working in trades and labour forces allow for bridging to the more conventional programmes of the institution. But, the courses themselves provide opportunities for adults to develop skills, esteem and avenues for contributing further to the richness of their cultures and society.

The University of Bombay, India, has two projects addressing the massive illiteracy problem in India. Its action through these projects also raises the consciousness of its own students and staff about the nature and effects of illiteracy, and of their own capacities to use this consciousness beyond the projects. The first is the "Each One Teach One Project". The objective is clear and methodology simple. Each student who volunteers for the project receives assistance in how to use standard-form materials to tutor an adult. The materials were produced as a result of research and development on adult learning and consist of a graded system of 20 activity cards and an explanatory booklet. Tutors teach for one semester at 3 - 4 days per week and receive credit towards their degrees for their participation.

The second project has been compulsory for all students of the university since 1988. The "Mass Programme of Functional Literacy" has two objectives. First, it enables the functional literacy of all students to be checked. Students are presented with a professional opinion on their likelihood of coping with the literacy demands of their courses. Remedial opportunities are made available for those at risk. At the same time, the project enables academics to outline and discuss literacy principles and methods of instruction which students might use in applications beyond their university role. The university has established a special unit to organize and administer the programme, coordinated with government in producing literacy materials and trained lecturers to conduct test-and-teach sessions. Generally 30-40 students are assigned to each class. In 1989, 60,000 students participated in the project. The University of Bombay audits the project and has reported positive evaluations for 1988-89.

In Pakistan, the Allama Iqbal Open University has a provision for widespread literacy support in the community. Academics at this institution were directly responsible for an innovative and successful project which combined functional literacy and primary education for females throughout the country. Using the consultative model, the target beneficiaries of the Allama Iqbal literacy team are the many street vendors, agricultural workers, out-of-school youth, domestics and other disadvantaged groups who are assisted by government and voluntary literacy tutors. Academics at the university have produced training kits and instructional modules which are used to train literacy workers throughout Pakistan. The materials are constructed around development themes and are guided in their composition by the features of local relevance and need. The team operates the programme through distance education and at regional centres established to support the distance education mode.

This is by no means an exhaustive list for the region. However, whether under network or single-institution format, what the initiatives reported here have in common is a commitment by the participating parties to stretch beyond the traditional in perceiving where the work of the university lies. How best to accommodate pragmatic issues resulting from that perception has become a challenging and exciting stimulus for the academics and institutions involved.

Emerging trends

The UNESCO PROAP (Bangkok) estimates that there are about 1,000 universities amongst the Member States and thousands of other institutions of higher education. Certainly, this seems to be a conservative estimate given Huang Shiqi's report on higher education in China which showed that in that country alone, the number of universities and colleges in 1983 was 805 (Huang Shiqi, 1984).

Fourteen of the 31 Member States have literacy rates above 80 per cent, another 4 between 70-80 per cent. Muhammad Selim of UNESCO's Regional Office suggested that "in these countries, the role of universities is rather minimal. Their role, if any, is limited mainly to research and other academic programmes." The Regional Office contrasted this perception with a view that in countries where literacy rates are very low the role of universities is critical, noting in particular Afghanistan (literacy level 29.4 per cent), Bangladesh (35.3 per cent), Bhutan (38.4 per cent), India (48.3 per cent), Pakistan (34.9 per cent) and Nepal (25.6 per cent).

Whilst the more critical situation of the developing countries is undeniable, the report reflects a view of what is happening in the developed countries based on what is not. It is true to say that the universities of the developed countries in the region have not been obvious in their literacy work connection. But this is not to say that it should remain so. If there are trends emerging from their work, they derive from new realizations from some governments about the economic value of active, adaptive literacy. With such realizations, governments are providing opportunities for universities to expand their role in facilitating what we know about literacy, its development, and systems by which its adaptation can best service individuals and societies. Some evidence of this provision is presented in the following sections on university participation.

University participation in adult literacy

In Australia, La Trobe University and the Sydney University of Technology have been funded by the national government as a consortium organizing and coordinating the training of adult literacy personnel throughout the country. Whilst the TAFE sector remains the major supplier of adult literacy courses in Australia as does its counterpart in New Zealand, this university consortium now has resources and responsibilities for utilizing the academy in developing quality provision. Similarly, the University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG) has received national and bilateral support for initiatives taken by its staff in literacy training for volunteer adult tutors. In a nation of 3.5 million people the language diversity is extreme. More than 800 vernacular languages are spoken. The researchers at UPNG have developed language-experience kits to help tutors with pedagogy, materials production, and mechanisms by which learners may apply their new competencies in literacy in practical ways. This technology is

much in demand from the government departments responsible for providing literacy tuition through formal and non-formal education and from the many non-government organizations which actively participate in adult education.

University participation in teacher education

In New Zealand and Australia massive programmes of in-service training on literacy have been implemented for the existing teaching forces. Focussing on early literacy (E.L.I.C.) and emergent literacy (F.L.I.P) these initiatives were introduced by government. However, universities in both places have been involved in providing expert training input as well as in programme design and evaluation.

Pre-service teacher-training is conducted in a range of higher education institutions throughout the region. In some places this includes universities. In others it does not. Recently, restructuring of the higher education sectors in Australia and New Zealand have projected a greater involvement of universities. Colleges, many of which formerly were dedicated to the single purpose of teacher preparation, have now merged into the larger, more diverse university sector. Courses are of three years for teachers at primary school level and four for those who will teach in secondary schools. Literacy and numeracy feature in courses at both levels with strategic frameworks developed by most state governments influencing course content for universities within each state. The frameworks typically stratify literacy into a variety of areas. For example in Victoria, five focal points are used, viz., early literacy, emergent literacy, literacy in vocational and further education, literacy in higher education and community literacy (Ministry of Education, Victoria, 1990).

In the Melanesian countries teacher-training is generally of two years duration. Literacy and numeracy methodology have been a basic component of most primary teacher-training courses in these nations. However, there is not the same consistency of inclusion in training programmes for secondary teachers and many who teach at that level have difficulty when confronted by students who have literacybased impediments to their progress in learning. This is a problem for secondary teachers which will be recognized by many in other areas throughout and beyond the Asia and Pacific region.

Conditional variables of literacy teaching such as multilingualism, teaching in a language other than the mother-tongue(s) of students, and teaching requiring sensitivity to particular handicapping conditions of some learners are treated differently in teacher preparation within and across nations of the region. For example, in Australia and New Zealand, English as a second language (ESL) methodology has been part of teacher preparation for some time. In Vanuatu, the methodology extends to both English and French, but as with Papua New Guinea there are difficulties in filling places with teachers to cover all vernacular languages.

University participation through research

Research into literacy development across the lifespan, the process of reading and pathways by which excellence and adaptability in using literacy behaviours are obtained, the nature of texts and issues of measurement and assessment have impacted on technological and methodological developments in literacy education.

For example, intensive study of the social context of literacy and of literacy as a social dynamic (Halliday, 1985, 1988; Halliday & Hasan, 1986; Harste 1986) has provided a rational basis for examining a range of issues in literacy development and pedagogy. We know that operational, cultural and critical dimensions of literacy may be developed better through a focus on writing in school learning (Graves, 1978; Green, 1988; Shanahan, 1987) and that those in early literacy who stretch the cognitive features of their learning into the metacognitive realm have better and more lasting achievement (Anstey, 1988; Boys, 1990). We understand that the structure of reading materials has distinctive features which greatly affect its reader friendliness and memorability (Meyer, 1975; Smith, 1989; Usher, 1989), and that the effects vary across the lifespan (Meyer, Young & Bartlett, 1989). We know too that the social worlds and characters presented to readers in written texts are highlighted by certain text properties (Luke, de Castell & Luke, 1983) which can be adapted to enable alternative prototypes to be examined and/or constructed (Singh, 1988).

Research on applications of schema theory and process methodology (Cambourne, 1984; Harste, 1986; Stringer & Faraclas, 1987) have illuminated the importance of reflection and procedural knowledge for those learning or reskilling in literacy. In turn, this has had some influence on teacher preparation where approaches which have focussed heavily on developing learners' reproductive memory strategies are now supplemented with concern for reflection, construction and reconstruction processes.

Along with their own research on learning in the vernacular (Ahai, 1984; Narakobi, 1980), these developments have given theoretical underpinning to the work of academics at the University of Papua New Guinea who have produced training programmes and resource kits for use throughout the nation. The kits are pragmatically sensible, easy to use and inexpensive. The content of their materials is determined by what is relevant and talked about in the local social context and tutors help children, adolescents and adults to record this content as written material upon which reading lessons can be based. The language of delivery is most often the vernacular, reflecting the consistent research finding that the language of talk facilitates the merger of familiar content and learning about new modes of literacy behaviour (Ahai, 1984; Kale, 1990). A similar approach has been taken in the rural literacy project in Thailand guided by lecturers at Srinakharinwirot University.

In viewing the achievements, it is important also to foreground new information and communication technologies in the research enterprise of certain universities in some societies. For example, the view of "technology" detailed in the Australian Government's report on "Choice and Technology in Learning" (Brumby Report, 1989, p.13) is as follows:

Technology is more than equipment; it also embraces the way in which equipment and materials are used and the learning experience provided.

This view lends itself to immediate action and research in relation to literacy and delivery systems for its teaching and learning. Already, reports have been prepared (Anderson, Cheetham, Grice & Marshall, 1990) on technology in use in urban adult literacy programmes, with rural communities through teleconferencing and diverse use of communications technology, with special communities such as Aborigines and visually-handicapped children, adolescents and adults, and with people acquiring literacy in a second language. In New Zealand a push is being made for global networks to be established in the higher education sector to better investigate the impact on societies of macrocommunication technology.

It remains to be seen in what ways, and under which societally-controllable conditions, advances in technology of this form can be causally and positively related to literacy expansion. For too long the association has been seen only in the sense of huge gaps which have accompanied it in relation to levels of quality in existing literacy standards.

In drawing together such involvements, some grounding is provided for understanding how the universities of Asia and the Pacific have current research, teaching and developmental involvements in literacy expansion. There is need for a mechanism through which to obtain a more comprehensive account of what we are doing, and a framework for extending this capacity into a coordinated, cooperative venture for the region.

In this respect the recent ratification of the Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees (August, 1989) has created opportunity for gathering and disseminating more comprehensive information about the activity of the higher education sector in the Asia and Pacific Region. What we know about current involvement with literacy might be better presented if such opportunity is acted upon, as might the sharing of ideas and resources across universities and societies of the region.

Conclusion

For those of us of the academy with the stamp of literacy upon our work and intentions, there are some derivatives for action in relation to clarifying the participation of universities in literacy expansion throughout the region:

- * Those strategically-placed to make policy decisions on the nature and direction of the university enterprise need to be convinced that literacy can and should be an imperative.

- * In those of our societies where government has acknowledged needs for expanding literacy levels through its communities, our decision-makers should signal clearly the capacity and readiness of universities to participate. Involvement possibilities include use of the academy in designing national policies and strategic action plans, in researching concepts, processes and applications, in developing theory and models to service instruction and technological development, in preparing an informed and competent teaching force, in coordinating and cooperating with other agencies of change, and in maintaining a functional utility between technology and the development of skills and competencies for individuals and societies served by that technology. The signalling of this capacity needs to include also the call for appropriate funding to enable intra-institutional dedication of resources to the designated tasks. And finally, it needs to be mindful of the dimensions of its own expertise and capabilities for its expansion.

- * Where government has not yet recognized, or acknowledged, literacy needs, action should be taken to establish whether these exist, whether they are component in other areas recognized and prioritized for government attention, and in what ways the university sector might culture its relationship with industry, education and community through raising awareness of literacy as an enabling technology.

- * Areas of investigation and research policy need to be identified which have common reference across the region, networks established through which such work might be done and agencies involved which have the character and resources to fund such projects.

Such strategic action and funding would enable us to:

- a) research more comprehensively the dynamic properties of excellence and adaptability in literacy development through and beyond basic education;
- b) react innovatively in formulating ideas about alternative approaches to traditional methods of educating and training.
- c) incorporate notions of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and projection in developing proper balance between the communicative technologies and the technologies of instruction and learning as they are directed at literacy acquisition and utilization of literate behaviours;
- d) reach into workplace settings to research relationships between literacy instruction and adaptability, empowerment and productivity in the workplace;
- e) adopt a life-span timeframe for research, training and monitoring of literacy excellence and enabling technologies.

The opportunity provided by the Expert Roundtable on "The University and Literacy" held as part of the 1990 UNESCO International Conference on Education is one which should be seized upon by Member States. Discussion there and through this publication may bring to the consciousness of the university sector that illiteracy is on the social agenda of all nations. Its eradication is more likely if capacities for research, teaching and technological development, the great strengths of universities, are brought to bear as part of that process.

Excellence in research is needed through which more analytic and descriptive understandings may be obtained of literacy and illiteracy, their antecedents and effects, and from which more prescriptive principles and technology for expanding literacy in local social contexts can be derived. Excellence in teaching is required such that across all faculty, the matter of literacy is recognized as both a process for learning and as a vehicle for the better communication of the learner's expertise. Excellence in technological development is essential if advances in science and in the technical character of industry are to be promoted by, and applied to, the enabling action of literate behaviours.

NOTES

1. Muhammad Selim. Personal communication. September 1990
2. Hambly, F. Personal communication. August 1990
3. Taiaroa, L. Personal communication. August 1990

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a consistent finding in the literature on adult literacy is the need for literacy initiatives to be context specific if they are to be relevant. Thus, in discussing the role the university can and should play in advancing the cause of literacy in the English-speaking Caribbean, it is necessary to provide some indication of the literacy context in which the university's role would be enacted. In doing so, two perspectives will be dealt with, the formal educational system with the focus on the child as learner, and the adult literacy context.

The formal educational system

The formal educational system in the Caribbean is one in which access is not a significant problem. Universality of access has been largely achieved. The following data drawn from Basic Education and Literacy: World Statistical Indicators, UNESCO, (1990) provide supporting data.

- (i) Six years primary schooling is the norm across the English-speaking Caribbean with some territories having seven years. This statistic contrasts with the baseline of four years of primary schooling which is typically taken in the literature as the minimum level of schooling required to achieve basic literacy.
- (ii) Enrollment rates are high.
- (iii) Sex parity has been achieved in terms of access and enrollment.

As a result of the success in providing access to primary education (5-11 years), several territories have found it practicable to deepen the primary thrust by providing pre-school education for children under five. By 1987 almost four out of every ten children were enrolled in pre-school education compared with the norm of two out of ten for developing countries as a whole (UNESCO, 1990).

At the secondary level, considerable progress has been made towards the complete democratization of secondary education. Indeed some territories have already achieved it.

In qualitative terms however, the picture is far from being as rosy. Repetition and drop out rates are often high (UNESCO OREALC, 1990). As judged by the printed media and official policy statements, there is also substantial public disquiet about the poor literacy

skills of many school leavers, most of whom would have had secondary education. Comparable complaints re "academic literacy" i.e. the basic comprehension skills needed to cope with academic tasks has been voiced by the university (Fields, 1989). Indeed the severity of the problem has led to the mounting of Proficiency in English screening for all incoming students, with those failing to achieve a certain mark having to do a "remedial" programme. As will be developed later, such university responses to the reality of poor functional literacy skills is under severe public attack on cost effective grounds.

Adult literacy

Both government and non-governmental organizations are involved in the provision of adult literacy in the Caribbean. Several substantial problems exist. Staffing for programmes is essentially on a volunteer basis, and is thus prone to the vagaries of volunteerism such as inability to recruit and keep staff. An even more basic problem, is the shortage of appropriately trained persons in the first place. In addition, the voluntary, community and non-governmental initiatives are particularly vulnerable to cash flow problems which can sometimes put the viability of the entire programme at risk.

The data essential for policy-making, programme impact and funding support is very inadequate. Few islands have reliable estimates of literacy levels. Even though the Caribbean Council on Adult Education (CARCAE) exists as the umbrella organization linking providers involved in the various aspects of adult education, networking is minimal given the cost and/or logistical implications of the geographical spread of the islands and the lack of computerized data-base facilities. This lack of effective networking militates against meaningful sharing of experiences and strategies by the various non-governmental organizations in the various islands, and robs the adult literacy initiatives of the stable data base needed to support the consolidation of programmes, formative evaluation of programme content and delivery strategies as well as a more targeted attack on the problems of adult literacy, given that adult functional illiterates are not a homogeneous group.

Given the above trends, it seems reasonable to argue that, in the Caribbean context, the field of adult literacy is conceptually fragmented and under-resourced at the governmental, non-governmental and university levels. It is important to point out however that this generalisation in no way negates the existence, from time to time, of sound adult literacy initiatives in particular islands, as against the region as a whole. For example, the Jamaica literacy programme, JAMAL, is well known within and outside the region.

In general terms therefore, the Caribbean literacy context can be thus summarized as one in which functional literacy is the major problem, though there are pockets of basic literacy concerns, especially in the rural areas of some territories, for example where French based Creole is the mother tongue but English is the language of literacy instruction and is used in official communicative contexts. In literacy terms therefore, the problems of the formal education sector in the Caribbean relate to "quality" not "access" concerns.

The university response

At the formal institutional level, there is minimal university involvement in literacy activities *per se* except through its extension arm, the School of Continuing Studies. There is, however, considerable informal contact, at the personal level, between individual staff members of the university and the various agencies engaged in literacy activities. In addition, existing

university programmes in teacher training represent an indirect university involvement in literacy issues.

Even this modest direct university involvement presents problems. There is considerable variation in programming. In addition, the outreach initiatives tend to be academic in orientation rather than concerned with personal and social empowerment in a Fricrean sense. They also tend to be under-resourced in terms of finance and skills. This latter point is particularly important. Literacy is an extremely complex concept (Newman and Beverstock, 1990) and consequently difficult to operationalize in valid, broad-based terms (Venezky et al, 1990). Addressing literacy issues therefore makes heavy demand for skilled personnel. Indeed such issues are frequently tackled by a team of specialists, for example in linguistics, psychology, anthropology, sociology, development studies, change initiation and so on. But such rationalized use of the university's human resources to tackle literacy issues is unlikely if literacy studies remain peripheral to mainstream university activity. Indeed given the university's marginal role to date in an area so fundamental to the "development" of the region, certain questions seem pertinent. Is literacy the university's business? Indeed what is the rationale for university involvement in the first place? What are the areas in which the university might be most usefully involved? What should be the strategy for involving the university directly?

The basic rationale for direct university involvement in literacy, is that higher education needs to be concerned with development issues affecting the society. Omolewa (this volume), citing an African educationalist, emphasized this point in his abstract presented to the Roundtable on the role of higher education in literacy at the 1990 International Conference on Education organized by the IBE as part of the activities for the International Literacy Year. The comment in brackets has been added by the writer.

"A university or university system in Africa (or any other developing country for that matter), that is indifferent to the needs of the wider society deserves the anger of the people and the nation it pretends to serve."

The relevance of the above position to the English-speaking Caribbean is underscored by the fact that the entire region is served by a single university, though it has three campuses in the Western, Eastern, and Southern Caribbean. The university is the regional institution with the credibility (within and outside the region), expertise and institutional framework necessary for attracting the human and financial resources needed in relation to the literacy thrusts in which, as is developed later, this chapter argues that the university should be involved. But if the university is to realize this potential in the area of literacy, current barriers to the legitimization of its involvement in literacy activities must be removed. These barriers stem essentially from a narrow perspective, within and without the university of literacy as being concerned with learning to read and write in the very limited basic sense typically associated with the role of primary education. Of course elitist conceptions of what constitutes valid university studies also play a part, especially in these times of structural adjustment and severe cost constraints with respect to governmental expenditure. How then can literacy studies be legitimized within our regional university? At least two steps would seem to be essential. Given the nature of institutions, literacy studies would need to be conceptualized within existing legitimized university activity, i.e. in terms of training and research, especially the latter. Secondly, the university would need to be made more sensitive to the complex, multi-faceted nature of literacy. For, as the sensitivity develops, two complementary outcomes are likely. Such an awareness will highlight the wide-ranging basic and applied research agenda demanded by the complex problems of literacy. In addition, as the various

facets are explored, the popularization of the research data in valid, user-friendly ways will not only create a more informed public, but at the same time erode public opposition to the university's involvement since it would be clear that the university is doing what universities are supposed to do, i.e. provide the information base needed for better conceptualization of problems as well as more informed decision-making.

The next section of this chapter therefore focuses sharply on the research agenda which can enable the university to make a substantial and unique contribution to tackling the literacy problems of the region it serves.

An illustrative short-term research agenda

The basic rationale for a research agenda rests on at least two grounds. First, as Wagner (1990, p. 3) poignantly points out, research is central to the effective conception and implementation of literacy initiatives.

"Basic and applied research, along with effective programme evaluation, are capable of providing critical information that will not only lead to greater efficiency in particular literacy programmes, but will also lead to greater public support of literacy programmes in these contemporary constraints."

Second, the literacy research base in the Caribbean is extremely limited. Random bits of research will therefore not meet the need for systematizing the thrust of literacy planning. In this regard, the following framework suggested by Alamprese (1988) represents a possible starting point:

- (i) research on learning;
- (ii) research on instruction;
- (iii) development of assessment and accountability systems;
- (iv) organization and delivery of services.

Illustrative examples of research activity that might be undertaken in the short term will now be given. They reflect interactions with interested groups such as the local International Literacy Year Committee and some non-governmental organizations on the kind of research which would be very useful.

Documenting the current situation

The need to understand the current literacy scene is basic to any attempt to make it more systematized. Inter alia it is important to establish the conceptions of literacy which undergird the various programmes in the region to see the extent to which they reflect current broad-based notions of literacy and the qualitative differences in learning between adults and children. Certainly, as one television series being aired in the sub-region shows, there are instances of no such differentiation in terms of methodology or content. Other descriptive data are also needed. What are the learner characteristics among students enrolled in adult literacy programmes? What are their motivations? What are the instructional methodologies and teaching-learning contexts emphasized? What strategies do programmes use and how effective are they? What are the contextual factors that facilitate (or hinder) programme/instructional effectiveness? Comparable questions could also be raised with respect to literacy instruction in the formal school system.

Measuring functional literacy

Estimates of functional literacy are critical to obtaining the necessary public and policy support for literacy programmes. Very few territories have such data. The challenge however is to use a conceptual framework and methodology which goes beyond the mere global statistic which is being asked for in the media and elsewhere, to provide data which advance more targeted responses to the tackling of the literacy problems.

Given the above objective, quantitative methodologies would need to be complemented by qualitative data with regard to actual performance on real life tasks that are meaningful to the learners, and thus likely to facilitate high learner motivation and ownership of the subsequent teaching-learning process. Such additional data might include concerns such as the following: profile information on the heterogeneity hidden by a global statistic; data on the nature of the functional literacy needs of the sub-groups; personalized snapshots such as motivations, values attached to literacy, uses of literacy and the strategies used to cope with their limited print literacy. Once again, comparable concerns and methodologies could also apply with respect to literacy instruction in the formal school system.

The need for participatory strategies

It is important to note that success in realizing the above research agenda will depend to a very large extent on the meaningful involvement of the actual participants—learners, teachers, organizers—in the literacy programmes. Put simply, it is essential that the research is not perceived as part of some hidden agenda by the university. Above all the research must be done with, not on, literacy participants as outlined above. The strategy must therefore be participatory, and analogous to the current movement in teacher education towards collaborative research with teachers, or better yet, by encouraging teachers to become action researchers and thus more reflective about their practice (Porter, 1990). For participants in an enterprise have perspectives, experiences, knowledge and effective responses which if not valued, impact negatively on ownership of the process and ultimately blunt the effect. Participatory research methods harness such inputs and enable the participants to become empowered and more reflective. In addition, in literacy research such methodologies also help to enhance the content validity of the research.

Understanding literacy problems

Another important role of the university in terms of involvement in literacy is to promote a better conceptualization of the nature of literacy problems and to suggest possible ways in which they may be tackled. An important example of this role is Craig's ((1989) analysis of why, despite the rosy picture in terms of access and enrollment as highlighted earlier, primary education across the region has failed to achieve its fundamental role of literacy acquisition. Craig conceptualizes the problem as essentially a sociolinguistic one in which the major obstacle to overcome in the teaching of reading in schools is the difference between the Creole language of children and the English which is the required language of literacy. In his view the picture has not changed despite substantial efforts, including major funded projects, because instructional practice and curriculum implementation in the English speaking Caribbean have tended to ignore "the link between literacy and proficiency in the language of literacy (English)." Put differently, curriculum design and instructional practice have tended to integrate language teaching in terms of thematic content but not in terms of

integrating (a) the teaching of proficiency in English in ways sensitive to the Creole realities of all the territories in the region and (b) the teaching of other facets of the language-arts, for example, reading.

In the writer's view, Craig's thesis addresses the heart of the qualitative problems of literacy instruction at the primary level as they relate to the development of functional literacy. Like Chall (1983), Craig differentiates qualitatively between the initial stage of reading (i.e. decoding) and comprehension i.e. reading to learn, reading to do and so on depending on the context of literacy use. It is important to qualitative interventions in the primary system in respect of literacy instruction to be cognizant of the fact that reading beyond the recognition stage is highly mediated by language proficiency, since reading for meaning is "not merely a matter of word-by-word recognition but very much a matter of picking up grammatical and lexical clues from the language of the reading material (Craig, 1989, p. 5)." In addition Craig's thesis helps to generate a testable hypothesis for the often noted drop in literacy growth in the juniors (7-11 years) with its decoding emphasis.

It should be clear that the foregoing conceptualization of literacy instruction in the Caribbean context offers tremendous opportunities for basic and applied research related to the qualitative aspect of functional literacy which our earlier contextual overview of the literacy situation in the Caribbean highlighted as being of critical importance.

No educational problem is uni-dimensional. Thus, no claim is being made that the sociolinguistic perspective highlighted by Craig is the panacea to literacy instruction problems in the formal educational context. All that is being argued is that his conceptual analysis, rooted as it is in empiricism, is illustrative of the unique contribution which the university can make to literacy initiatives in the region.

Enhancing understanding through popularization of research findings

The preceding discussion on the sociolinguistic realities of literacy instruction in the English-speaking Caribbean was focussed primarily on the school context because of its potential for stemming the number of functional illiterates leaving the formal educational system. It is, however, necessary to realize its potential contribution to adult literacy programmes and delivery. Publication and dissemination of the considerable body of sociolinguistic research which has already been done by the university and which is literacy-related in a form which is user-friendly, while retaining its linguistic integrity, would be a major contribution to the enhancement of literacy work in the region in terms of materials development, instructional methodology, and more informed decision-making with respect to the medium of literacy instruction for specific language contexts.

Enhancing understanding through literacy acquisition research

Wagner (1990) highlights the paucity of literacy acquisition research in the Third World as compared with the developed world. This situation is undesirable given (a) the increasing evidence of the tremendous impact of family literacy values and behaviours on literacy acquisition by their children (Newman and Beverstock, 1990), (b) existing knowledge of what constitutes literacy supportive environments at the acquisition stage and how parents can be enlisted as partners in enhancing literacy acquisition by providing home environments supportive of literacy development, thus making literacy valued at school and at home (Barrett, 1986).

Research on the foundations of literacy in the region represents another area in which the university's involvement and leadership would be of tremendous help to literacy initiatives in the English-speaking Caribbean. Such research would be invaluable in permitting more targeted teacher training as well as interventions at the community level.

Given the qualitative differences between children and adults as learners, each group needs to be studied in its own right. Thus a corollary of the focus on the foundations of literacy acquisition in Caribbean children is the need for ethnographic data on how adults in different social and literacy contexts acquire literacy, and what the acquisition of literacy means to them. Such data are clearly critical to understanding the adult literacy instruction as well as make a significant contribution to more relevant training of literacy workers.

Let me use the twin examples of acquisition and sociolinguistic research discussed to underscore the strategic purpose in highlighting a literacy research agenda as central to enlisting meaningful ongoing involvement of the university in literacy initiatives. Quite clearly the greater emphasis on participant field research in the adult literacy acquisition example is more likely to be of interest to university personnel already committed to literacy studies while the Craig research agenda would probably be more attractive to persons who are in teacher training, curriculum or linguistic departments (all areas with a long history in the University of the West Indies) and who do not perceive literacy per se as their main professional thrust. But that is exactly the point I am trying to make. The research agenda needed to inform literacy initiatives is so broad-based, that there is considerable scope for the involvement of persons with different interests/perspectives while still ensuring the conceptual integrity which coherent strategic planning and programming would require.

Training

University inputs into the training of literacy specialists would be essential for at least two reasons. First and foremost, it represents a necessary response to the needs of literacy programmes for more trained personnel to tackle the problems of curriculum, teaching methodology as well as programme and learner assessment which confront them. Secondly, training is essential as a preventive strategy in the formal educational context. In both instances the challenges of conceptual integration of insights from several contributing disciplines and the most effective means of marrying theory and practice, would be as great as they are in the traditional teacher-training and curriculum programmes at the university. In short, the challenge to the university to become more directly involved in the training aspect of literacy is essentially a call for an extension of a role to which it is already committed.

In addition to the need for training there is also the need for materials development which is informed by research and reflects current notions of the nature and functions of literacy. Without a wide range of appropriate materialism programmes run the risk of seeing the new literates relapse.

Delivery mechanisms

The university's distance teaching capability (UWIDITE) seems to have tremendous potential with respect to meeting the training and materials concerns mentioned above, given that it provides a sophisticated teleconferencing capability linking all territories to each other and to the three campuses of the university. It would thus seem critical that the university explores how distance education could be used to promote functional literacy concerns. It is clear,

however, that funding for appropriate training of the University of the West Indies staff involved would be needed if such initiatives are to be realized.

In sum, using the Caribbean literacy context as its reference point, this chapter has explored the challenges of functional literacy in the territories served by the University of the West Indies, and the potential contribution the university can make to a well conceptualized, coordinated literacy thrust. It is hoped that given the new priority accorded outreach, especially to the non-campus countries, in the university's Development Plan for the decade, there will be increased formal university thrusts in the fundamental area of literacy education at both the formal and non-formal levels.

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This chapter on "universities and literacy" focuses on adult literacy rather than school literacy, that is, on people's capacity to write letters and notes, read newspapers and pamphlets and notices, use everyday forms and documents, and so on. It focuses on literacy in North America, with specific examples drawn from Canada(1).

The chapter proceeds by first reporting on university activities, both in practitioner training and in research, and then, in relation to the current situation, developing some general suggestions for an agenda for research activity.

There are two important preliminaries to note about the context of such a discussion. One concerns the place of literacy work within North American society, and the other concerns the place of literacy studies within universities.

The discussion of adult literacy in North America occurs within the political and economic context of a restricted or liberal (2) welfare state. Such a state shows a general preference for the market rather than the state to shape society. It ordinarily provides a minimal subsistence, and restricted opportunities for education and training, to those who have the bad fortune to be its clients. This restricted state activity is the context for various forms of community organizing work (sometimes politically-motivated), as well as for charitable or volunteer activity, aimed to ameliorate the life circumstances of the poor. Adult literacy work has a natural affinity with these other and more general community organizing and volunteer activities.

Adult literacy is a marginal concern for universities. This is, in part, because public and academic discussion of adult literacy is relatively new. Adult basic education has been a topic of public and academic discourse for only about 25 years, and adult literacy specifically for only about 10 years. But furthermore, this discussion is of relatively low academic status. Adult literacy involves matters quite removed from the usual preserve of universities, the development and articulation of knowledge in the sciences and humanities, and the training and credentialling of professionals and managers. Adult literacy involves sectors of society which are often poor and without a public voice. Adult literacy even involves matters removed from the usual preserve of university education faculties, the training and certification of teachers for a system of compulsory education for children and adolescents, with established regimes of administration, curriculum and teacher certification. Literacy programming deals with a very small proportion of its potential clientele, without

secure administrative and financial support, without established curriculum, and usually without obligatory teacher-training. Adult literacy is not a sector of education for which there is as yet a big credentialling business to be done. Furthermore, within the current political and economic context, there are strong and growing pressures for universities to affiliate with business interests, putting knowledge at their service, and supplementing state financing with their contributions. This also does not make for a fundamental interest in literacy.

There are, however, forces that more actively support university interest in literacy. The increasing public discussion and public support for literacy in recent years has been impelled in part by economic concerns (see below), but also in part by a social impulse to create modes of communication open to all who live in the society. And traditions of social criticism that remain alive within universities are conducive to the kind of fundamental inquiry that literacy questions can inspire. Furthermore, an array of research questions still quite open to definition and inquiry attracts academic interest.

Training literacy practitioners

In North America, teacher training and certification are in general functions of university faculties of education, and so the training of literacy practitioners is one obvious area for university work. Adult literacy is not recognized as a standard offering of education faculties, as is, for example, educational psychology. Nevertheless, courses and programmes have been developed, primarily as a result of the individual initiative of academics (initially concerned with adult education, reading theory, or adult second-language teaching) who have taken up the literacy issue. Courses, institutes and certificate programmes that serve practising teachers as well as others interested in literacy have been developed at a number of universities. The first wave of this development occurred mostly in established adult education departments in the early 1980's (3). More recently, programmes have developed in other universities and other university departments (4).

The most commonly available forms of training in Canadian universities serve practitioners who have some experience in the field and want to reflect on their work. This arrangement, perhaps on principle the most sensible arrangement of substantial teacher training, also reflects the fact that job security and career progression in literacy work have been the exception rather than the rule.

Across universities, there is no standard for the content and extent of such training. Some institutions offer single courses. Some certificate programmes are made up of a number of courses. Some courses and programmes emphasize teaching technique. Some programmes, in reading methodology, for example, include a practicum experience which may involve adult learners. One programme takes an orientation to literacy work as community organization. Another emphasizes issues surrounding the transition from orality to literacy, as well as methodology. Two relatively extensive programmes might be more fully described. In Québec, the Module de linguistique at the Université du Québec à Montréal has offered a "Certificat en alphabétisation" for a number of years. It offers training that is at the same time practical and theoretical: questions of methodology are considered in the light of an understanding of literacy and illiteracy in the sociocultural context of Québec society. Carleton University conducts Summer Institutes for Literacy Practitioners, with courses taught both by academics and by practitioners. It also offers Canada's first Master's degree

programme with a specialization in adult literacy (although faculty and students at other universities have designed individual programmes which include literacy-focused thesis work(5)). Most students will be experienced practitioners who will spend a year reviewing literacy theory and practice, and return to their workplaces to conduct thesis research.

There has, so far, been little discussion of these different training patterns and their best uses. There has likewise been little discussion of the extent of involvement in training literacy practitioners that should be minimal for universities, or of strategies for securing that involvement. All these areas require more open discussion and debate.

Mention should also be made of the programme of research, seminars and publications conducted by the McLuhan programme in Culture and Technology and the Consortium on Literacy at the University of Toronto. Its activities are generally dedicated to inquiry into the transition from orality to literacy and the "consequences of literacy," both in reshaping cognition, and in developing specialized registers of language, enabling bureaucratic institutions, and the like. This inquiry is in the tradition of such scholars as Harold Innis, Marshall McLuhan, Jack Goody and Walter Ong (6).

Research as a backdrop to training

Most literacy practitioners work in the field without the benefit of formal training or opportunity for sustained reflection and research. Indeed many practitioners are volunteer tutors (7); and although some volunteers remain active over a period of years, others only last months. Training in these contexts typically takes the form of introductory workshops (usually less than 15 hours in duration) for new volunteer tutors, sometimes supplemented by follow-up sessions. Teachers attend workshops at literacy conferences, engage in discussion and debate within programmes, and visit one another's programmes. A very small proportion of this training involves formal university course offerings.

It is important to understand questions of training for both regularly employed practitioners and for volunteers in relation to the learner-centred approaches that are increasingly recognized as central to effective teaching. Some traditional approaches to curriculum and to training have emphasized a highly structured phonics-based approach. A brief and routinized training was perhaps adequate for practitioners adopting such an approach. However, learner-centred approaches demand a complex teaching and learning process, one that begins with recognizing and identifying the strength, knowledge and needs of learners; that juxtaposes these with a kind of rough operating map of the skills and uses of literacy, and barriers that may be encountered in learning; and that finally invents learning contexts that can build bridges between students' experiences and knowledge and the skills and uses of literacy that they will learn. Some adult learners are quite competent at articulating their own learning needs and learning processes. They can collaborate with teachers or tutors in managing their learning. But other learners have not had the kinds of experiences in their families, at school or on the job that have allowed them to develop articulate self-observation and self-assertion. Thus, literacy work can require a great deal of those who teach.

In this context, universities may participate in the organization of training, and in preparing training materials. However, universities' most important role may be conducting substantial, critical research. Consider here a handful of topics for research on adult literacy and its teaching and learning. Research could describe the workings of good one-to-one

tutoring practices, with the intention of making such practices more readily accessible to novice practitioners. Such descriptions could be based in a strong tradition of research into the social contexts of cognition and cognitive growth. They would likely focus on the negotiation of a balance between learners' efforts and teachers' assistance, in which teachers provide a "scaffold," consisting of questioning, cueing and minimal telling, that allows learners to accomplish tasks as they develop knowledge and skill (8). Research could also review the circumstances in which teaching by volunteer tutors works well or poorly. In some programme circumstances and with some students, volunteer tutoring may be a preferred method of teaching, for the intensity and the specific individual attention it allows. In other circumstances, particularly when students are not skillful at articulating their own learning needs and processes, and when teachers must therefore be very accomplished, volunteer tutoring may be inadequate.

A number of Canadian studies, perhaps the research equivalent of learner-centred teaching, have focused on learners' conceptions of literacy and of learning, and their implications for teaching(9). Such studies reveal, for example, that a gap sometimes exists between approaches to teaching reading that emphasize the meaning of print, and student conceptions of reading as a decoding of symbols. Such a pedagogical gap between learners' and teachers' conceptions of course must be worked through in order for any teaching process to be effective. A related area of inquiry, only beginning to be addressed, concerns what is actually taught and learned in literacy programmes, and whether students become familiar with a wide enough range of "literacies" or written genres to assert themselves in the range of contexts in which they are active(10).

Other work has gone beyond instructional situations to inquire into the meanings of literacy and literacy learning, particularly in relation to gender(11).

These studies open up large questions about the complex intertwining of literacy learning and literacy use into relations of power. They show that conventional discussions about the capacity of literacy to be "emancipatory," or about literacy as economically significant, or about "motivation" as the central determinant of study, need to be rethought from the standpoint of women, and, by extension, from different ethnic/racial and class standpoints.

A final item in this sample of research topics must be the documentation of programme experience. Much writing about programmes, for practical reasons, takes the form of proposals or evaluations, and even narrative accounts often adopt the promotional style of proposals. Critical documentation generally remains to be done, although collections of studies on key issues are beginning to appear(12). For a collection of studies of programming emphasizing learner participation and learner control, see Arlene Fingeret and Paul Jurmo (eds.) (1989).

All the work described here — in training, in studies of literacy and numeracy learning, and in studies of programming alternatives — should involve collaboration between university researchers and practitioners. Dialogue between researchers and practitioners can enable training to be informed by a sense of practical as well as analytical significance. Collaboration in research can enable dense description and rigorous analysis to inform one another. It must be understood, however, that collaboration implies something more profound than scholars and researchers "transmitting theory" to practitioners who apply it. It implies that practitioners must be involved in the formulation of knowledge about literacy.

The involvement of practitioners in formulating knowledge requires adaptations of ordinary academic research methods, and of the ordinary style and locales of academic discussion. It also requires that practitioners must be allowed the time and other resources required to be involved in research(13). Thus the demand for collaboration goes against the grain of conventional academic arrangements (discipline-based research, peer review, and so on), and against the grain of conventional programming arrangements (which confine practitioners to instructional and administrative tasks). The extent to which both academic and literacy programming resources can be diverted to such novel arrangements, is an ongoing question.

Of course research does, and it should, extend beyond teaching and programming issues. Some of these broader issues are elaborated in the following sections.

Measuring literacy levels

One broader issue is the conceptualization and measurement of restricted literacy. With the "shock" of discovering illiteracy in industrialized societies, there is often an exaggerated attention to people who cannot read menus or street signs. But literacy limited to this extent is not the most common literacy problem. There is a very wide range of literacy abilities, and people at different points within this range may have difficulties "functioning" in different contexts.

For example, the recent *Survey of Literacy Skills Used in Daily Activities*, conducted by Statistics Canada(14) showed that although over a third of adult Canadians had difficulty with tested "everyday reading requirements," only 7 per cent had difficulty picking out familiar words in simple texts, in tasks like menu-reading; this includes 2 per cent who said they had no reading skills in English or French and did not take the reading survey. A much larger group, over 30 per cent, handled the simplest reading tasks, but had difficulty using even clearly laid out documents, in tasks like looking at a school form to see when it should be returned. As regards numeracy, again, over a third of adults had difficulty on a test "handling the numerical tasks normally encountered" in documents and texts, involving nothing more difficult than a sequence of arithmetic operations. Within this group, 14 per cent could, at most, locate and recognize numbers in simple documents. A further 24 per cent could do simple addition and subtraction involved in documents and forms, but not more complex tasks. Such survey work offers a sophisticated breakdown of levels of literacy and numeracy ability. It makes possible a much more adequate sociological description and policy discussion of literacy problems than do mere proclamations of millions suffering from an undefined "illiteracy."(15)

Although these numbers from Statistics Canada are among the best literacy statistics collected in the world, there are problems even with them. The sample has age and geographic limitations, and excludes people living on Indian reserves. The statistics only tell us how many people have difficulties *on a test*, and not how many have difficulties in actual everyday life, where people often substitute memory for reading, get help filling out forms, and so on. They focus on competence at a delimited institutional literacy — on handling the print produced by government and business — and neglect reading to understand what's going on in the world, or writing to preserve one's own story or to reach out to others. The underlying conceptualization relies on a metaphorical rendering of literacy as a (computer) process of

"information processing," and leaves out the human knowledge and intentionality that are central to literacy practice, and perhaps to defensible social theory(16).

Universities have been(17) and should be involved in the ongoing dynamic of developing and critiquing conceptions and measurements of literacy. The central focus of this work will continue to be on the objective testing of literacy abilities. It should also attend to people's self-assessments of literacy skill, to devising estimates of numbers of people who have skills less than those demanded by the contexts they are actually active in, and to the ways in which literacy as a concrete individual activity escapes the boundaries of any conceptualization and measurement. And there should be reasoned debate about what distribution of literacy abilities and opportunities meets standards of social equity(18).

Research from the bottom up

Most research concerning the adult literacy issues turns the research spotlight on people with limited literacy, and makes them an object of scrutiny—their abilities, their life histories, their learning processes, their susceptibility to recruitment methods, and so on. But the adult literacy issue also has the capacity to pivot the research spotlight. Research from the standpoint of literacy workers and learners may bring to light the institutional arrangements of our society, and aspects of their workings that do not ordinarily come into view. We have already begun to see that understanding restricted literacy requires that we understand something of how compulsory education breaks down for many of its participants. Research from the bottom up may also study the workings of an economy and state that do not seriously strive to eradicate illiteracy.

Another pivoting of the research spotlight should be brought about by the question of recruitment to literacy learning. Studies and programme experience alike have shown the centrality of local connections and word-of-mouth contact in recruitment. This is sometimes related to arguments that to recruit those who are "hard to reach" — and this means most potential literacy students — require "community-based" programmes, programmes embedded in the life of particular communities(19). Many conceptual issues in literacy policy then centre around the meaning of "community-based" programming: is it a matter of neighbourhood location, or of ties between literacy programmes and other social services, or of connections between programmes and popular groups such as trade unions or native communities, or of control at least in part by members of the communities served? Such conceptual issues are sometimes fervently debated, and are defined *de facto*, by practitioners and policy-makers(20). University researchers should also be involved in their clarification(21).

But furthermore, demands for community embeddedness and community control raise important questions about the governing apparatuses through which literacy work is coordinated and controlled — that is, about governmental, professional, and academic institutions (the working locales of most likely readers of papers on universities and literacy). The mechanisms of these institutions— mandates, programme funding formulas, programme reporting requirements, agendas for research, and so on — define in practice the available space for recruitment, teaching, and the rest of literacy work. They also define the ways in which literacy work is articulated to the most general processes of governing society(22). These governing mechanisms exist, of course, in tension with community embeddedness and control. Their study raises sometimes very technical questions about "administration." The expertise of university researchers should be usefully applied to critical studies of these

governing mechanisms and their shaping of literacy work itself (likely case studies involving substantial documentary analysis)(23). Academic expertise might even contribute to the development of managerial forms which can promote and coordinate, without thwarting community embeddedness and control.

Policy analysis and research

There are also many important areas for policy analysis and research. These broadly concern mandates for public involvement in literacy, as they intersect with processes of economic organization and reorganization, and with struggles for social equity and democracy.

There are various individual reasons for involvement in literacy work, and various mandates for public involvement. On the one hand, there are economic projects for literacy. Many individuals study literacy as one step towards securing job training or better employment. In social policy discussions, economic arguments are always present. Ten years ago, most economic arguments about literacy saw it as necessary to avoid social "costs" associated with long-term unemployment, social assistance, etc (24). There is now a somewhat different attention to the economics of illiteracy, to literacy provision as an element of labour force management. Literacy is increasingly seen as necessary to the preparation of a "flexible" labour force that can deal with training programme documents and manuals, various forms of the documentation of work (for example in Statistical Process Control), and complex computer-mediated work processes (25). On the other hand, many students' and practitioners' reasons for involvement derive from different projects. Literacy may mean dignity and capability, dealing with personal business, writing letters or writing one's own history, feeling confident to use language in many contexts(26). Literacy may also be intertwined with an active struggle for greater democracy and greater economic equity(27). Research and reflection should clarify the interrelations of these different reasons and mandates for adult literacy. For example, it seems clear that work organization may either promote or hinder the use of literacy, the retention of literacy, and participation in literacy learning. Some studies show that people in low-skill, dead-end jobs tend not to see value in, or participate in, education (and, consequently, to be little involved in their children's education); while people in jobs with broad skills, or with opportunities for advancement, tend more to participate in education. Such findings suggest that policies to promote literacy would include policies to expand job skills, autonomy, and advancement opportunities.

Conversely, it may be argued that the impetus for social equity may in the long run serve economic interests. Informal accounts suggest that some employers in Canada have come to encourage trade union-sponsored literacy programmes, since they find that workers engaging in such programmes show more commitment to their jobs. Similarly, literacy programming now may be required to deal with an imminent labour shortage in the 1990s(28). The interrelations of different reasons and mandates for adult literacy are also a matter of debate over human rights and social equity, a debate from which universities should not shy away.

Universities and literacy

This chapter has suggested that questions of adult literacy raise unique intellectual and organizational demands for universities. These questions require broad and rigorous

academic work inquiry on novel topics, and from novel perspectives. For literacy practitioners to engage with and contribute to the relevant intellectual work requires novel forms of training, and novel forms of research organization. Efforts to understand the space available for literacy work in existing political and economic contexts, and to struggle for a larger space for both programming and research, raise profound questions concerning the arrangements of power in our society, including the arrangements of universities themselves.

NOTES

(1) The chapter is one product of a programme of literacy research undertaken by the Centre for Policy Studies in Education, University of British Columbia, in conjunction with the Canadian Association for Adult Education.

(2) Terminology and analysis are elaborated in the work of Gosta Esping-Andersen (1989), "The Three Political Economies of the Welfare State," *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 26:1, pp. 10-36.

(3) At the University of British Columbia, the University of Saskatchewan, the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, the Université du Québec à Montréal, and St Francis Xavier University.

(4) Courses and programmes have been formed in recent years not only in adult education departments, as at the University of Alberta, but also elsewhere in education faculties, as at the University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, Henson College at Dalhousie University, and at Carleton University in the Department of Linguistics.

(5) These include Dalhousie University, the University of New Brunswick, the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, the University of Alberta, and the University of British Columbia.

(6) A seminal paper is David R. Olson (1977), "From Utterance to Text: The Bias of Language in Speech and Writing," *Harvard Educational Review* 47:3, pp. 257-81; a recent overview of work may be found in Olson (ed.) "Special Issue On Understanding Literacy", *Interchange* 18:1&2.

(7) The prevalence of volunteer tutoring is related to reluctance in the liberal welfare state to provide public support to provision; cf. Leslie Limage (1986), "Adult Literacy Policy in Industrialized Countries", *Comparative Education Review* 30:1, pp. 50-72.

(8) See, for example, studies in Barbara Rogoff and Jean Lave (eds.) (1984), *Everyday Cognition*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press.

(9) Margaret O'Brien (1989), "Student Concepts of Literacy Learning: The Neglected Factor in Remediation", in Maurice Taylor and James A. Draper (eds.), *Adult Literacy Perspectives*. Toronto, Culture Concepts, pp. 301-08; William T. Fagan (1988), "Concepts of Reading and Writing Among Low-Literate Adults", *Reading Research and Instruction* 27:4, pp. 47-60. For related line of inquiry relying on close observation of learners, see Charles A. Norman and Grace V. Malicky (1987), "Stages in the Reading Development of Adults", *Journal of Reading* 30, pp. 302-7.

- (10) One approach to such questions is taken in Richard Darville (1989), "The Language of Experience and the Literacy of Power," in Maurice Taylor and James A. Draper (eds.), *Adult Literacy Perspectives*. Toronto, Culture Concepts, pp. 25-40.
- (11) Kathleen Rockhill (1987), "Literacy as Threat/Desire," in Jane Gaskell and Arlene McLaren (eds.), *Women and Education: A Canadian Perspective*. Calgary, Detselig, pp. 315-31; Rockhill (1989), "Gender, Language and the Politics of Literacy," *British Journal of the Sociology of Education* 8:2, pp. 153-67; Jennifer Horsman (1990), *Something in My Mind Besides the Everyday: Women and Literacy*. Toronto, Women's Press; *Women and Literacy* (1988); "Special Issue: Women and Literacy," *Canadian Woman Studies/les cahiers de la femme* 9:3&4. Also rising from Canadian intellectual traditions, although focused on literacy development in socialist regimes, is Judith Marshall (1990), "Literacy and People's Power in a Mozambican Factory," *Comparative Education Review* 34:1, pp. 61-84.
- (12) *Participatory Literacy Education*. San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, Inc. (*New Directions for Continuing Education* No. 42). James Draper and Maurice Taylor are editing a collection of studies of issues in Canadian literacy programming, to appear in 1991.
- (13) As argued and exemplified by Mary Hamilton (1989), "The Role of Universities in Promoting Literacy," Institute for Research and Development in Post-Compulsory Education, Lancaster University.
- (14) See Stan Jones, Alvin Satin, Karen Kelly and Gilles Montigny (in press), "Surveys of Adult Literacy: The Canadian Experience," 1990 *Proceedings of the American Statistical Association*
- (15) Also see Irwin Kirsch and Ann Jungeblut (1986), *Literacy: Profiles of America's Young Adults* (Report No. 16-PL-02). Princetown, New Jersey, National Assessment of Educational Progress..
- (16) See, for example, John R. Searle (1983), *Intentionality: An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- (17) Stan Jones from Carleton University has been actively involved in the recent Statistics Canada work. Critiques of an earlier survey conducted by Southam News, and of the public discussion that it supported, include William T. Fagan (1988), "Literacy in Canada: A Critique of the Southam Report," *Alberta Journal of Educational Research* 34:3, pp. 224-231; David R. Olson (1988), "Mythologizing Literacy," *English Quarterly* 21:2, pp. 115-19; John Willinsky (1989), "The Construction of a Crisis: Literacy in Canada," *Canadian Education Review* 15:1, pp. 1-15.
- (18) Cf. Sylvia Scribner (1986), "Literacy in Three Metaphors," in Nancy L. Stein (ed.), *Literacy in American Schools*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, pp. 7-22.
- (19) York, Anchor/Doubleday; Carman St. John Hunter and David Harman (1985, Paperback Edition), *Adult Illiteracy in the United States*. New York, McGraw Hill; David Harman (1987), *Illiteracy: A National Dilemma*. New York, Cambridge Book Company; Arlene Fingeret (1984), *Adult Literacy Education: Current and Future Directions*, Columbus, Ohio, ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career and Vocational Education.

- (20) A major Canadian study is Elaine Gaber-Katz and Gladys M. Watson (1990), *Community-based Literacy: An Emerging Practice and Theory*. Toronto, OISE Press.
- (21) For one attempt at such clarification, see Richard Darville (1989), "Prospects for Adult Literacy Policy in British Columbia," *Policy Explorations* 4:4 (Centre for Policy Studies in Education, University of British Columbia) (ERIC document 320 019).
- (22) This approach to social inquiry is elaborated in Dorothy E. Smith, *The Everyday World as Problematic: A Feminist Sociology*. Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1987; and Smith, *The Conceptual Practices of Power: A Feminist Sociology of Knowledge*. Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1990.
- (23) Case studies in similar contexts may be found in Roxana Ng, Gillian Walker and Jacob Muller (eds.) (1990), *Community Organization and the Canadian State*, Toronto, Garamond Press, especially Part 2, "State Funding: Bureaucratic Relations and Community Activities."
- (24) Of course whether a country is committed to full employment, or rather uses unemployment as a means of controlling inflation, implies different policy issues for literacy.
- (25) A transitional argument, conveying both the "costs" argument and the labour force management argument, is Canadian Business Task Force on Literacy (1987), *Measuring the Costs of Literacy in Canada*. Toronto, Author; cf. Leon Muszynski and David A. Wolfe (1989), "New Technology and Training: Lessons from Abroad," *Canadian Public Policy/Analyse de Politiques* 15:3, pp. 245-64. For the U.S. see Forrest P. Chisman (1989), *Jump Start: The Federal Role in Adult Literacy*, Final Report of the Project on Adult Literacy, Southport, Connecticut, The Southport Institute for Policy Analysis; and Richard M. Cyert and David C. Mowery (1989), "Technology, Employment and U.S. Competitiveness," *Scientific American* 260:5, pp. 54-62.
- (26) These "reasons" are often evident in collections of student writing that are an ever more prevalent feature of the literacy landscape in Canada. See, for example, issues of Voices magazine (Invergarry Learning Centre, Surrey, British Columbia).
- (27) For practitioners' statements, see "Cedar Glen Declaration" (1987) *Literacy/Alphabétisation* 12:1; and "Declaration from the Toronto Seminar: Literacy in Industrialized Countries" (1988) in Margaret Gayfer (ed.), *Literacy in Industrialized Countries: A Focus on Practice*. Toronto, International Council for Adult Education.
- (28) Such questions, and comparative analyses of Canada and Northern European countries, are addressed in the work of Kjell Rubenson; see, for example, Rubenson (1989), "The Economics of ABE," in Maurice Taylor and James A. Draper (eds.), *Adult Literacy Perspectives*. Toronto, Culture Concepts, pp. 387-98. Also see Richard Darville (1988), "Adult Literacy and Public Policy: Report of an International Seminar," *Policy Explorations* 3:2 (Centre for Policy Studies in Education, University of British Columbia) (ERIC document 304 557).



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Universities, like other social institutions, must play a major role in the elimination of illiteracy and the reduction of its negative impacts on societies. Such a responsibility must be assumed by all the universities of the world but particularly by those of the least developed and developing countries.

Illiteracy is a phenomenon which has been negatively associated with the stage of socio-economic development in every country of the world. The greater the percentage of illiterates in a given population, the slower the rates of growth and development.

In the Arab States, which is one of the developing regions of the world, this phenomenon has contributed drastically to the noticeable slowness in efforts exerted by Governments to achieve leaps toward further socio-economic development. High illiteracy rates among the population constitute a major obstacle to these efforts. However, due to other urgent priorities (and, perhaps, to the unclear perception of the magnitude of the negative impact of this phenomenon on efforts to achieve significant rates of growth and development), the issue of illiteracy has not been given the proper attention it deserves in the Arab States. As a result, the percentage of illiterates has registered, in the last few decades, a marginal rate of decrease, whereas the absolute numbers of Arab illiterates have continued to increase in magnitude. This cannot be attributed to any intensification in literacy campaigns, but to a decrease in rates of population growth. In the forthcoming parts of this chapter, the relevant statistics and the exact size of this problem will be cited and analyzed.

Various studies, which have tackled this problem in the Arab regional context, have indicated that more efforts will have to be exerted to reduce the percentages of illiteracy, on one hand, and the absolute numbers of illiterates among the Arab population, on the other.

The mobilization of all social institutions has been cited as an important factor in the Arab quest for the elimination of illiteracy in the region. The final report of the Meeting of Experts on the Regional Programme for the Universalization and Renewal of Primary Education and the Eradication of Illiteracy in the Arab States by the Year 2000 (ARA BUPEAL) has stressed the importance of this aspect. It has stated that "among the most important factors of success in overcoming major problems in human societies is the political will coupled with the mobilization of society and all its forces in a bid to motivate both institutions and individuals, to raise the level of their efficiency, to rationalize their investment of human resources and to ensure optimal returns. (*L'Education Nouvelle*, No. 45, 1988).

Among all social institutions, the university—being at the top of the educational ladder, and a centre of intellectual life possessing most of the scientific and intellectual resources—is perhaps the institution most capable of playing a crucial role in overcoming major problems such as illiteracy.

Unfortunately for the Arab Region, this role, during the last decades, has been insignificant and rather limited in scope. Combating illiteracy has been one of the low priorities of universities. In spite of indirect contributions, such as the training of literacy teachers and other categories of educational personnel, the role of universities is still marginal and insignificant.

Some universities consider that their role in this issue is merely to prepare teachers and personnel for literacy campaigns. It is obvious, however, that their role is more comprehensive. World experience has shown that universities can play multiple roles which definitely extend beyond what has been experienced in the Arab Region.

Contemporary universities have three major functions to perform for the benefit of societies (i.e. teaching, research and community services), each of which can contribute to literacy efforts. While teaching helps in the preparation of needed cadres, and research is important in diagnosing problems, propose solutions and implement innovation, community services have the much more direct contribution of providing for the actual implementation of literacy campaigns through the participation of students, professors and university personnel in literacy and post-literacy teaching. The comprehensive elaboration of these roles will be cited in the forthcoming parts of this chapter.

It is important, however, that the magnitude of the illiteracy problem in the Arab Region be analyzed in the first part of this study. This will be followed by an attempt to identify this problem in relation to the various contributions that universities can make for its solution, or at least for the reduction of its negative impact on society.

Illiteracy in the Arab States: scope and magnitude

Although the overall percentage of illiteracy in the Arab Region for the age group 15 and above has decreased from 55 per cent in 1985 to 49 per cent in 1990, the absolute number of illiterates has increased from 59 million in 1985 to 61 million in 1990. The percentage is likely to decrease by the year 2000 to 38.2 per cent, but the absolute number is expected to increase to 66 million (i.e. about 50 per cent of the productive work force in the region).

Illiteracy is more prevalent among females. The number of illiterate females reached 37 million in 1985 (68 per cent of the age group 15 and above), as opposed to 22 million males. This is one of the highest rates in the world. It is worth mentioning that the widespread illiteracy among females is not only due to educational insufficiency; other socio-cultural factors play a major role in this domain.

Disparities in rates of illiteracy exist among Arab countries. The table on page 42 which presents statistics for 19 countries, indicates that percentages range between 19.9 per cent for Lebanon and Jordan to 75.9 per cent for Somalia.

Illiteracy rates by sex of the population aged 15 and over (%)

Country	Year	Latest observed data		Illiteracy rates Unesco estimates for 1990 (15 years and over)
		Illiteracy rates		
		MF	F	MF
Algeria	1987	50.4	64.2	42.6
Bahrain	1981	30.2	41.4	22.6
Democrartic Yemen (10+)	1973	72.9	92.1	60.9
Egypt	1976	61.8	77.6	51.6
Iraq	1965	75.8	87.2	40.3
Jordan	1979	34.6	49.5	19.9
Kuwait	1985	25.5	31.2	27.0
Lebanon (25+)	1970	45.3	58.6	19.9
Libyan A. J. (10+)	1973	49.9	69.9	36.2
Mauritania	---	---	---	66.0
Morocco	1971	88.5	98.7	50.5
Qatar	1986	24.3	27.5	24.1
Saudi Arabia	1982	48.9	69.2	37.6
Somalia	---	---	---	75.9
Sudan	1966	85.3	96.3	72.9
Syrian A. R.	1970	60.0	80.0	35.3
Tunisia	1984	49.3	59.4	34.7
U. A. Emirates	1975	46.5	61.9	---
Yemen A. R.	---	---	---	61.5

Source: UNESCO Office of Statistics, 1990.

Furthermore, disparities are not only limited to an inter-country level; for they can also be found at national levels between rural and urban areas, as well as among social groups within the same area.

All in all, the percentage of illiteracy in the Arab region is among the highest in the world. In spite of the regional and national efforts exerted to reduce the illiteracy rates in the Arab region, various dominant factors persist and constitute major limitations on efforts to reduce illiteracy rates. Among these factors are the following:

* Limited intake capacity of primary and basic education in a number of Arab countries. In spite of the large increase in the number of first level students in the Arab region as a whole (from 12.6 million in 1970 to 16.7 million in 1985 to 27 million in 1987) the net enrolment rate in 1985 reached 68 per cent of children aged 6-11.

These figures mean that approximately one-fourth of Arab children between 6-11 years old are outside the schools . This constitutes one of the main sources of illiteracy in the region.

- * There are relatively high percentages of repeaters and drop-outs at the primary level of education.

- * High percentages of females, inhabitants of rural areas and other special and disadvantaged groups remain out of school due to educational and other socio-cultural factors.

- * In spite of the existence of national campaigns for literacy and post-literacy programmes, efforts are still below expectations; for the number of illiterates, as well as the number of those who have lapsed into illiteracy, continue to increase.

It is evident that any future efforts exerted at national, regional and international levels to eliminate illiteracy and meet targets in the Arab region must address these issues if any real progress is to be made.

IMPACT OF ILLITERACY ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Education is a force which shapes the destiny of societies. It evidently correlates with the rates of growth and development of these societies. Therefore, the higher the levels of educational achievement attained by a particular nation, the higher the levels of development and progress that are, or can be, attained. This positive correlation is indisputable; for it is supported by empirical evidence gathered from various regions of the world.

Illiteracy limits the capacity of the population in terms of production and participation in the whole process of development. The percentages of illiterates in the composition of the labour force in the Arab region is relatively high, particularly in rural areas, where the dominating economic sector is agriculture. This situation is reflected in the slow rates of growth in this important economic activity.

Furthermore, the participation of Arab females in the productive sector and in the composition of the work force is negligible. This is attributed to high illiteracy rates, in addition to socio-cultural factors.

High illiteracy rates contribute significantly to slowness in the introduction of advanced means of technology and their investment in the various economic sectors.

In spite of the relatively large size of the Arab population, many Arab countries, due to illiteracy, still depend on foreign labour, particularly in the skilled and semi-skilled categories. Some countries import even unskilled labour.

Obviously, there is no need to dwell on the negative impact of illiteracy on the total efforts for development in the Arab region. However there is a need to stress the important role that the whole education system can play in transforming the drastic demographic growth into the education and productive force needed to achieve leaps in socio-economic development.

Arab countries should promote an awareness of the fact that with the existence of high rates of illiteracy, which constitute a great liability on development efforts, future prospects will remain gloomy and unencouraging. This fact should encourage authorities to place literacy among the top national, regional and international priorities.

UNIVERSITIES AND LITERACY: THE INDISPUTABLE LINKS

Among all social institutions in any given society, the university is placed in the forefront in the quest for solving the crucial and immediate problems facing all human societies. This is a reasonable claim if we take into consideration the human, intellectual and technical capacities which this institution possesses compared to all other social institutions. However, the assertion of this claim magnifies the role of this institution in social affairs and increases its responsibility in solving the problems of societies.

In developing countries in general, and the Arab countries in particular, illiteracy is to be considered one of the most critical problems which require the mobilization of all social institutions. The role of universities in this regard cannot be ignored or minimized.

As previously stated, contemporary universities have to perform three essential functions (i.e.: teaching, research and community services). This chapter attempts to analyze the links between these institutions and literacy and post-literacy programmes, through the examination of the roles of each of the university functions in promoting literacy and post-literacy activities.

University teaching and literacy

University teaching is the function through which the institution is able to prepare needed cadres, disseminate knowledge and enhance the cultural heritage. Faculties of education are the institutions responsible for the preparation and training of various categories of educational personnel including those needed for literacy and post-literacy activities.

In the Arab States, one of the most important obstacles confronting the intensification of literacy and post-literacy campaigns is the shortage of personnel qualified in this field of activities, particularly teachers. So far, only a few institutions provide such a training. Moreover, the present ineffectiveness of literacy activities can also be attributed to the dependence on primary education personnel to carry out these activities, in spite of the difference in needed skills and in the objectives of the two educational activities.

A Regional Seminar on the Training of Basic Education Teachers in the Arab Region recommended that "faculties, in the Arab region, should undertake the incorporation of some courses in adult education and literacy into the training programmes designed for basic education teachers". (Final Report of Seminar, 1989).

Although the responsibilities of faculties of education are not restricted to the pre-service training of literacy and post-literacy personnel, Arab universities' involvement in the in-service training remains insignificant and sometimes non-existent.

UNESCO's Medium-Term Plan, the recommendations of the Jomtien Conference and most seminars stressed that the provision of sufficient numbers of teachers qualified to

shoulder the responsibilities for the universalization of basic education requires the adoption of non-traditional methods of training, such as independent learning and accelerated training; as well as the adoption of integrated policies, programmes and structures for pre-service and in-service training of all categories of educational personnel. From field experience, it is quite safe to say that all these innovative contemporary trends have not been adopted by higher education institutions in the Arab region.

Involvement of faculties of education in the development and renovation of literacy programmes is another area which requires more attention. The present practice followed in the Arab region regarding the utilization of traditional approaches to promote literacy has proved to be limited in impact. Thus, this adoption of non-traditional approaches has proved to be of urgent priority at this stage. The involvement of universities in this endeavour is important.

University research and literacy

Educational research plays an instrumental role in the development and renewal of educational systems in general and literacy programmes in particular.

In spite of the importance of the university's research function, its present role in supporting efforts to provide basic education needs to all is still meagre in almost all developing countries, including the Arab region. The working document for the Jomtien Conference ascertained this fact by saying that current research efforts in developing countries would not be adequate to design strategies and evaluation for the basic education initiative.

The university's educational research is needed to perform various tasks for the benefit of literacy activities; i.e., evaluation of the magnitude of the problem, suggestion of new strategies and methods to deal with it, participation in the design of relevant contents and materials, follow-up and evaluation of campaigns and implemented programmes and compilation of feedback information to revise the adopted course of action. Furthermore, research workers, professors, researchers... etc., should be in charge of implementing innovations in literacy activities, such as utilizing the mass media organs in accelerating literacy and post-literacy programmes.

If one tries to evaluate the present research efforts undertaken by Arab universities for the benefit of literacy programmes, he/she will reach the conclusion that only insignificant efforts are devoted to deal with this area. In fact, literacy research is not even among the priorities of Arab universities' research centres and institutions. The whole issue is left to research centres affiliated with ministries of education, which, in spite of their limited potential, do not receive any support from university centres.

Community service and literacy

Community service is the function through which the university provides direct services to the surrounding communities. It is a function through which universities break out of their ivory tower to reach society and deliver various services. Through this particular function, the university can physically involve itself in the various affairs of the nation. Therefore, the role of this function in literacy and post-literacy can leave tangible and direct impact on efforts deployed in this area.

Non-traditional universities have provided literacy and post-literacy programmes with significant contributions. One of the most important innovations in this domain is the so-called "study service" which involves the direct participation of university students (under the guidance of their professors) in literacy and post-literacy campaigns as a service to the community. It is worth mentioning that some universities in developing countries require students to participate in literacy campaigns for credit and as prerequisites for graduation. Although this has never been the case in the Arab universities, the Arab region is perhaps the one that needs this kind of massive effort the most.

Literacy authorities in the Arab region possess neither the financial nor the human resources needed to deal with the massive rates of illiteracy in the region. However, university students, professors and personnel could constitute the most important source of human resources for literacy campaigns.

Authorities and professors need to participate in the public lectures and forums which tackle literacy issues and their impact on socio-economic development. A massive investment of mass media in these public awareness campaigns is indispensable. Another important aspect is the involvement of university professors, in their consultative capacities, in the actual implementation and evaluation of literacy and post-literacy campaigns. The importance of this aspect stems from the fact that, in most developing countries, these campaigns are run by limited numbers of experts in the field and are always in urgent need for more and more experts in order to maintain their momentum.

Another important aspect of the community services lies in sharing and using the university's physical facilities in the conduct of literacy and post-literacy classes. In fact, people may be encouraged to attend evening classes that are held on a university campus; and hence, the number of illiterates enrolled might increase significantly. Moreover, such an arrangement might help in making-up for the shortage in the physical facilities at the disposal of literacy authorities.

UNIVERSITY AND LITERACY: ISSUES AND DILEMMAS

The role of universities in literacy and post-literacy activities poses some issues and dilemmas of both national and international nature. In order to be dealt with in a more scientific and practical manner, these issues and dilemmas need to be identified and brought into focus and the extent of their impact needs to be specified.

At the national level, universities in the Arab region suffer from some problems which have so far limited their contribution to literacy activities and programmes. Perhaps one of the most important issues is the university's total preoccupation with the drastic increases in the social demand for higher education and the explosion in the numbers of students enrolled at this level of education. This phenomenon, coupled with limited financial and human resources, forced institutions to devote all efforts to meet the quantitative expansion in higher education. Within this context, universities were unable to get involved in many other aspects of social services including the promotion of literacy. On the other hand, national policies in most Arab countries have not yet precisely defined the responsibility of universities in national efforts and campaigns. Therefore, most of the universities' by-laws do not regard literacy as one of the recognized institutional objectives.

The other area which has been frequently mentioned in this chapter as being an important vehicle of university contribution to literacy efforts is the community service function. As previously stated, this function has not yet been given the appropriate level of priority. Therefore, it has not received a high degree of financial and human support. For this reason, the provision of community services, including support for literacy programmes and activities has not been possible.

Most Arab universities are presently facing problems in allocating the ever-shrinking available financial resources. Literacy, not being among university priorities and objectives, does not receive any allocations, most of which are given to the teaching services - with an insignificant percentage being devoted to research.

In their co-operative activities with foreign universities, Arab institutions do not normally promote efforts for literacy projects. Also, the exchange of experience in this domain is rather limited. Moreover, national inter-university co-operation in the domain of literacy is rarely promoted.

In spite of the fact that international experience in university involvement in literacy is so vast, Arab universities have not yet exerted any efforts to benefit from it. The implementation of co-operative pilot projects by national and foreign universities, yet another aspect of international co-operation, is still not promoted. This remains an excellent field for international co-operation. Furthermore, co-operation in literacy research among Arab and foreign universities is still limited.

SUGGESTIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

International co-operation has to be considered as one of the most important instruments for the promotion of literacy worldwide. Recent trends indicate that the elimination of illiteracy requires joint international co-operative efforts to support national campaigns. The Jomtien Conference, the International Literacy Year and the International Conference on Education have chosen literacy and provision of education for all as their main theme. In the Arab region, the launching of the Regional programme for the universalization and renewal of primary education and the eradication of illiteracy in the Arab states by the year 2000 (ARABUPEAL), represents another effort by UNESCO to promote international co-operation through regional activities.

It is to be understood that international co-operation can never be successful in supporting regional and national literacy efforts unless co-operative actions and activities are properly planned, designed and implemented.

The promotion of inter-university co-operation is an important aspect of international co-operation in this regard. Efforts of UNESCO's twinning programme should be supported, and joint research and actions for the benefit of literacy should be considered an important aspect of this effort.

The exchange of experiences and information among universities is another mechanism for such co-operation. Furthermore, encouraging the implementation of joint pilot projects, in the area of literacy, among world universities could prove to be highly beneficial.

There are now a few regional strategies and projects in the Arab region, such as the Arab strategy for the eradication of illiteracy and ARABUPEAL. These regional efforts need support from international bodies and agencies. This support ranges from the technical to the financial aspects. Agencies which declare literacy as a top priority, such as UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP and the World Bank, could successfully channel their support through present regional mechanisms. It is evident that universities must play a significant role in receiving this support and in implementing activities.

Another important area of international co-operation is the mobilization of world awareness and resources. National resources devoted to this domain are rather limited, and this necessitates support from rich to poor or least developed countries.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In the introduction to this chapter illiteracy was described as a phenomenon which has been negatively correlated with the stage of socio-economic development in every state of the world. The greater the percentage of illiterates, in a given population, the slower the rates of growth and development. In the Arab region, which is one of the developing regions of the world, this phenomenon has contributed drastically to the evident slowness in efforts exerted to achieve leaps toward socio-economic development. It was stressed in the introduction that the issue of illiteracy has not been given the proper attention it deserves in the Arab region. This is why the absolute number of illiterates continues to increase.

The mobilization of all social institutions has been cited as an important factor in the Arab quest for the elimination of illiteracy in the region. The university, with its intellectual, scientific and human resources, is placed in the forefront of these institutions, and its role in promoting literacy and post-literacy activities was described as significant and crucial.

The impact of illiteracy on the socio-economic development of the region was analyzed earlier in this chapter. Furthermore, high illiteracy rates in the Arab region has significantly contributed to the slowing down of the introduction of advanced means of technology and their investment in the various economic sectors.

Since illiteracy is negatively correlated with productivity, its impact on total development has to be negative if not devastating. One important consequence of high rates of illiteracy in the Arab region is that in spite of the large size of population, many Arab countries still depend on foreign labour, particularly in the skilled and semi-skilled categories. This fact ascertains, beyond any doubt, that the illiterate population constitutes a major liability on efforts to achieve significant rates of economic growth and development.

In developing countries in general, and in the Arab countries in particular, illiteracy is to be considered one of the most critical problems which requires the mobilization of all social institutions. The role of universities can neither be ignored nor minimized. Non-traditional universities have three main functions to perform for the benefit of societies, i.e., teaching, research and community services. Each of these functions has a role to play in literacy and post-literacy programmes and activities.

The teaching function of the universities is responsible for the preparation of literacy personnel, promotion of social awareness of the gravity of increased illiteracy, participation

in implementing non-traditional approaches to combat illiteracy, in addition to the direct involvement of professors and students (under university service scheme) in literacy and post-literacy teaching. It was mentioned in the study that Arab universities' role in this area is still marginal.

The university's educational research is needed to perform various tasks for the benefit of literacy activities. These include evaluation of the magnitude of the problem, suggestion of the new strategies and methods to deal with it, participation in the design of relevant contents and materials follow-up and evaluation of implemented campaigns and compilation of the feedback information needed to revise the adopted course of action.

The third and most important function, through which universities can provide direct services to local communities is the community service function. Non-traditional universities have provided literacy and post-literacy programmes with significant contributions which have taken many forms, such as direct involvement of professors, students and personnel in literacy teaching, promotion of forums, provision of advice and consultations to literacy personnel and the use of university facilities for literacy classes. All these services are indispensable for implementing successful literacy and post-literacy campaigns. The service function in Arab universities seems to be placed at a low level of priority, and therefore, its impact on literacy is still below the level required.

In this chapter, various issues and dilemmas were identified. These were considered to be obstacles hindering the attempts of universities to perform a successful role in literacy programmes. Thus, at the national level, the preoccupation of universities with the increase in social demand, the lack of clear national policies, the limited role of community service function and of financial resources allocated to higher education, are to be considered the main issues and dilemmas in the Arab region. At the international level, the limited scope of exchange of experience and information, and the lack of joint research and pilot projects can be identified as the major issues and obstacles.

A few suggestions for the international co-operation were advanced. Promotion of inter-university co-operation and exchange of information and world experiences and mobilization of resources and awareness were considered to be proper mechanisms in this domain.

From the above analysis, two conclusions can be reached. Firstly, the links between university and literacy can neither be disputed nor ignored. However, they seem to be weak; and intensive efforts will have to be exerted to strengthen them. Secondly, in spite of the increased magnitude of illiteracy in the Arab region, universities have not yet been able to play an effective role in extending literacy.

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today the role of universities in Africa in the promotion of literacy is not contested. It is agreed that universities in Africa cannot afford to be indifferent to the educational need of the bulk of the illiterate population both from the point of view of social responsibility and relevance and that all efforts should be made to encourage the institutions to be more actively involved in all aspects of literacy work. This has, however, not always been the case. The aim of this chapter is to draw attention to the initial reluctance on the part of universities to become involved in literacy efforts, to examine the nature, scope and status of the subsequent participation, and to assess the prospects for the future.

The fact that our experience and illustrations are drawn mostly from anglophone West and East Africa is explained by the absence of readily accessible materials on the Universities of North and Southern Africa and the francophone countries. Much of the observations in the paper are however also valid for most of the countries in Africa (BREDA, 1979, 1983).

Initial reluctance

Universities in Africa were established and guided through the formative years by Europeans. Consequently they inherited western assumption about the function of universities as well as their particular organization and traditions (Raybould, 1957; Yesufu, 1973; Omolewa, 1975). In Europe advanced intellectual studies were the preoccupation of universities: literacy or primary education were by no means university concerns. The aspect of adult education that concerned universities was the liberal education of the model of the Workers Education Association (WEA) established in 1903 in Britain, providing advanced courses for people who were already literate and remaining non-certificate oriented.

Institutes of education, an institute of adult education, and departments of extra-mural studies in the Gold Coast (now Ghana) and Ibadan, Nigeria, were established as from 1948 following the pioneering work of the Oxford Delegacy for Extra-mural Studies (Yousif, 1974). The extra-mural work at the University College of Makerere (Uganda) encouraged by W.J.A. Harris, was established along the WEA traditions as from 1953, so also was the work of Fourah Bay College (Sierra Leone) under W.E. Taylor. The directors of these institutes, mostly British or British-trained, warned that mass literacy work was not directly the job of the university and in Nigeria, A.J. Carpenter (appointed the country's mass education officer in 1946), did not involve the new University College of Ibadan in its literacy drive.

In Sierra Leone, the Board of Extra-Mural Studies of Fourah Bay College decided at a meeting on 19 March 1957 that adult education work should be shared among three agencies: the government Department of Adult Education which should provide classes aiming at public examinations, the government Department of Social Development which should handle "such forms of basic education as are necessary for community development", and the university Department of Extra-Mural Studies which should carry its "work of university level into the community by means of university extension lectures, conferences, weekend schools and so on" (Omolewa, 1984). The Board thus upheld the prevalent conception of university education (Osuji, 1981: 252-263). Similarly, David Kimble, founding director of the Institute of Adult Education in Ghana, explained, adult education could form the essential background for local action by helping people to understand their own problems. (Okeem, 1982: 108-111).

Faculties of education were not established in African countries until 1961. Even then, the faculties did not address the issues of primary schools, which had the direct responsibility for providing literacy to the young. Furthermore, during the debate about the Universal Primary Education (UPE) projects, universities were not immediately involved. In Nigeria, for example, UPE was launched as from 1955, and the Institute of Education was established only in 1956, and the first Faculty of Education five years later at the University of Ibadan.

The first academic journal launched on the continent in 1957, the *West African Journal of Education*, was founded to address only post-primary education issues. Even when the editorial decision was reviewed to enable the journal to support primary education issues, the contribution in this area was minimal. The issue of literacy was also not given adequate attention (Oyelese, 1982).

Initiatives

The level of illiteracy remained high among the masses of the people, not only because the universities were not concerned, but also because schools were few, teachers were not available, and the student intake was too small compared with the numbers who remained outside the educational system.

The situation also deteriorated in spite of the efforts of governments and communities, even when it was observed that there was a correlation between literacy and development, literacy and technological advancement, literacy and good health, literacy and political maturity, and so on. The illiteracy rate remained high, usually higher in the rural areas than in urban areas, and higher among the poor and humble than among the rich and influential. A report for Tanzania in 1961 is typical for Africa. The illiteracy rate was as high as 80 per cent among the adult females, up to 95 per cent in some areas, and only 40 per cent in others (H. Mason, *Literacy and Community Development*, 1961, p. 47, quoted in Bwatwa, 1989:26).

Various political parties in the newly independent countries of Sub-Saharan Africa decided to address the problem, but their efforts were feeble and spasmodic. For example, Nkrumah's Convention People's Party of the Gold Coast (now Ghana) which, during the campaign for the 1957 elections, had observed that "the procedure of holding elections is enormously facilitated by mass literacy, and the effectiveness of councillors is greatly diminished if they cannot read and write", launched a Mass Literacy Campaign following its

victory at the elections. The campaign was not sustained (Hagan, 1979: 196-199). In Nigeria, the Action Group Party in 1955 introduced Universal Primary Education in the Western Region of the country in an effort to "eliminate illiteracy from the roots". The lack of continuity in the educational policy and the troubled political climate of the time led to the demise of the programme. Nyerere's Tanzania recorded a success story as the Tanganyika African National Union mounted a literacy campaign, first among the adult population and, immediately afterwards among the school-age population. There were a few success stories in other countries where the illiteracy problem escalated as the population growth increased and resources diminished.

The international community also began to take an active interest in the matter of illiteracy. At the World Conference on Adult Education held in Montreal, Canada, in 1960, it was recommended that "Action should be taken to create, within the competent organizations of the United Nations, including UNESCO, a special fund, derived from increased contributions from member states, for the specific purpose of eliminating illiteracy in the developing and newly independent countries. (UNESCO, 1963: 94).

The following year, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted a resolution, inviting UNESCO "to make a general review...of the question of the eradication of mass illiteracy throughout the world" (UNESCO, 1963: 95). The General Conference of UNESCO proceeded to authorize its Director-General at its 12th session "to coordinate the activities for the eradication of illiteracy within the programme of the budget for 1963-64 into a comprehensive programme" (UNESCO, 1963: 96). Subsequently the General Conference of UNESCO requested the United Nations General Assembly to consider "plans for the attainment of universal primary education should be simultaneously accompanied by a world campaign for adult literacy as an essential element of the promotion of social and economic progress within the Development Decade" (UNESCO, 1979: 42). It had also suggested that the initial phase of the world campaign "should aim at making literate two-thirds of the adult illiterates in Africa, Asia and Latin America" (UNESCO, 1979: 42).

Eager to involve all agencies and networks that could assist in the effort to attain universal literacy, UNESCO brought in the universities to support its primary schooling projects, and selected nine countries for the Experimental World Literacy Programme (EWLP).

A beginning

Such was the situation when UNESCO set up, under an agreement with the Federal Government of Nigeria and the University of Ibadan, the Institute of African Adult Education at the University of Ibadan in 1964. The Institute was to serve Africa and extend to literacy the traditional functions of a university in research, publication and service. The Institute began to conduct outreach programmes and to carry out evaluation studies in adult literacy, with a special focus on functional literacy, and to organize workshops and seminars. The story of this Institute is still to be told: the dedication and energy of the pioneer staff, notably Ogunshye, Tomori, Ahmed, Durojaiye, and Nasution, provided the foundation for the achievements of the University of Ibadan in this area, which in 1989 were recognized by the International Reading Association Literacy Award presented at UNESCO on International Literacy Day, 8 September.

In the meantime, African political leaders once more resumed the efforts to address the serious problem of illiteracy, following the World Ministers of Education Meeting in

Teheran in 1965, and the designation of 8 September as International Literacy Day. The leaders recognized mass literacy as an instrument for nation building and the achievement of social change. The Ministers of Education resolved in 1976 to make every effort towards the establishment of an educational system capable of providing every citizen with access to educational opportunity aimed at the development of the individual, the community and the society (UNESCO, 1976).

Universities were thus welcome to make their contribution to reduce illiteracy. Universities began to review their attitudes to literacy work, concluding that university outreach programmes could not justifiably ignore the bulk of the population simply because they were illiterate. As Babs Fafunwa, one of the eloquent educationalists, put it, "a university or university college system in Africa that is indifferent to the needs of the wider society deserves the anger of the people and the nation it pretends to serve." (Quoted in Ristuben, 1983: 53). Thus the universities began to respond to the challenges posed by the intractable problem of illiteracy, often in collaboration with government, but usually working independently, insisting that the participation of the ordinary people was vital to their operations.

Training

The first effort of the universities has been in the area of training. This is understandable, given the expertise of university staff in this aspect of work. After an exhaustive exercise in the identification of the training needs of the middle-level manpower working as literacy organizers and instructors, and as community development officers, the University of Ibadan pioneered this development in Africa when it introduced the three-year Bachelor of Education degree programme in 1971. More universities, notably the University of Benin, the University of Lagos, the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, and Bayero University, Kano, all in Nigeria, as well as the University of Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, and the University of Khartoum, Sudan, have entered into the field of training at this level. In addition to courses in communication skills, and adult education methods, there are "selective" courses in distance education and workers' education. Courses dealing with aspects of literacy at the Master's and Doctoral levels were also introduced as from 1974 in some universities, notably Ibadan, Lagos and Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University), all in Nigeria.

Universities do not have a monopoly of training "front line" workers in literacy but they have succeeded in making valuable contributions in this area. For example, teachers are selected and trained for primary schools and adult literacy classes at regular university sessions and at "crash programmes", ad hoc, short-term or vacation courses. Basically, the teachers are given additional skills in teaching the illiterate child or adult to recognize letters, manipulate letters, read, write and count. The teachers are also given specific courses in psychology, philosophy, curriculum design, teaching methods, history, geography and related subjects to enable them to become more sensitive to the needs of young learners. In the case of adult instructors, they have to possess special skills in teaching adult learners; design curriculum, prepare materials, motivate learners and assess performance.

Institutes of education, as in Tanzania, Ghana, Nigeria, Zambia and Botswana, or departments of education, as in Kenya, handle the programme. The selection is carefully done, often through qualifying tests to ensure that the quality of the trainees is controlled at entry point. These courses last from one academic session of nine months to four years for the award of a certificate, diploma or degree.

The contribution of the universities to meeting the training needs of the literacy organizers and front-line instructors has been significant. Coles acknowledges the work of the University of Botswana in providing professional training courses (Coles, 1983: 34), while reports from Nigeria show that the country's universities have made an impact in the field with the excellence of their work (Bown, 1972; Akinpelu and Omolewa, 1989).

At the primary education level, universities' involvement in the preparation of teachers comes mainly from the Associateship Certificate in Education (ACE) programme which has thrived in Ghana and Nigeria. Graduate training in education which has become important from 1970 has gradually led to the cultivation of the spirit of research and an improved quality of the staff at all levels of education.

Research

The greatest asset of universities in Africa is perhaps the research potential as much of their resources are invested in the acquisition of research skills by university staff and postgraduate students. Research also constitutes an integral part of the work of the universities and literacy is now a legitimate area of research interest in the broad field of education.

Thus, issues such as wastage among primary school students, early withdrawal from school before the acquisition of permanent literacy, the selection of an appropriate language of literacy in multi-lingual communities and the measurement of the learning outcomes of adult learners constitute part of the research efforts of the university staff, either on commission or as their regular area of research preoccupation. Given the large number of languages in Africa, and the neglect of African languages in the school curriculum, projects such as the Ife Primary School Project undertook studies on the status of local languages in the promotion of learning. Learning materials have also been produced for literacy learning from the results of research.

The contribution of the universities to research has been most significant. The volume of research has increased and the scope has become sufficiently broad to cover most aspects of the theories of learning, guidance and counselling, evaluation, curriculum development and school management. Governments expect the universities in Africa to assist in development through research. To this end, grants are attracted to the universities for research, while specific projects are commissioned in areas considered critical and development-oriented. Some work has been done in the vital area of motivation, learner orientation, and curriculum development, while some standard works on the history, philosophy and economics of literacy are emerging.

Direct action

A few of the universities have embarked on direct action in literacy, mostly as pilot projects, organizing classes for adult basic numeracy and literacy, and subsequently for post-literacy, remedial and functional literacy programmes. Some incursion has also been made to the rural areas, to peasants and women also to the urban poor in an attempt to address some usually forgotten target groups.

A leading African scholar, Joseph Ki-Zerbo, had earlier suggested that these new di-

rections were needed for the African universities to meet the challenges of the new decade as he counsels:

"The African university must not be an island of future highly endowed people in an ocean of obscurantism and of misery. Its opening and extension must lead it to lifelong education, to refresher courses, to admissions without formal entry qualifications, to the simulation of development activities, to the wider opening of its libraries to participation in literacy campaigns. Without this popularization, the university runs the risk of being a lifeless framework." (Quoted in Akinpelu, 1987: 55).

The University of Botswana has remained active in evaluating the progress of the country's literacy efforts (Gaborone, et al, 1989). The Obafemi Awolowo University at Ife in Nigeria has taken some direct action to equip the people of some selected villages in the Oranmiyan Local Government Council of Oyo State with literacy skills. The literacy project is part of a wider Isoya Rural Development Project of the university aimed at assisting the villagers to improve their activities in agriculture, health, home economics which was also acquiring basic literacy skills. (Williams and Alao, 1974).

The University of Ibadan has taken perhaps the boldest step in the frontline work in literacy in Africa. At this institution, the University is believed to have the mandate to assist to empower the powerless people in the rural areas and among the rural poor through the acquisition of literacy skills. The university also serves as a neutral and independent institution which is trusted to reach out to workers and all religious groups with its literacy work. Its contribution has helped in the reduction of illiteracy in a country with a staggering illiteracy rate (Asiamah, 1990: 2).

In its drive not just to put words in the mouths of the illiterate but to put skill into their hands, love in their hearts, respect for their culture and confidence in their minds, the university currently holds its rural graduation ceremonies, not on the campuses but in the villages, and these are presided over, not by vice-chancellors, who are often remote and unfamiliar, but by the *Baales*, the highly respected traditional rulers in their impressive regalia. The university also encourages, by deliberate policy, the cultivation of critical thinking and action, and continuing learning through the post-literacy, extra-mural, and external studies programme.

One important feature of strength of the programmes at Ibadan is the continuing education package. An illiterate, enrolled at the institution, is given courses of instruction for nine months after which the Adult Basic Literacy Certificate may be awarded. Thereafter, there is the two-year post-literacy course which leads to the award of the equivalent of the Primary Leaving Certificate. A pre-General Certificate of Education programme with a minimum duration of two years is offered for workers studying on a part-time basis, and is patronized by the neo-literate.

An additional component of the courses at Ibadan is the establishment of the external studies programme (ESP) which allows teachers who have obtained the Nigerian Certificate of Education to study by distance education for the degree of the University of Ibadan. The duration of the programme is a minimum of five years. The programme aims to encourage teachers to continue to learn and to upgrade their skills while remaining on their jobs. The ESP has an active component relevant to the training of future leaders in the field of literacy,

as the curriculum includes the theory and practice of adult education, methods of adult teaching, and the psychology of adult learning.

Finally the Department of Adult Education of Ibadan encourages continuing learning in literacy issues through the institution of Functional Literacy Seminars which began in 1971. The Seminar annually assembles literacy practitioners who spend a full week exchanging ideas about all matters related to literacy delivery.

The University of Benin and the University of Ibadan have also made an important contribution in the area of material preparation, especially the writing of primers and the production of teaching aids by teams of researchers and seasoned practitioners in the field of literacy. These materials, addressed to all professional groups in Nigeria, are used as models of instruction and are purchased by literacy centres throughout the country.

Leadership, advocacy and public service

The area where university contribution has been most decisive is in offering the necessary leadership in national, sub-regional and regional associations involved in the promotion of literacy to the child as well as to the adult. The experience of the Science Education Programme in Africa (SEPA) in encouraging scientific literacy on the continent under the leadership of university science educators is an eloquent testimony to this type of contribution (Ogunniyi, 1982: 61-68).

At the adult level, the formation of the African Adult Education Association (AAEA) was led by university dons at the institutes of adult education and departments of adult education. From 1969, the efforts of intellectuals such as Kwasi Ampene (Ghana), Emmanuel Tugbiyele (Nigeria), Juma Nyirenda (Zambia), and Paul Mhaiki (Tanzania) have provided the vigorous leadership of national adult education associations in their countries of origin. Through their writings, visits to key policymakers, and the holding of seminars and workshops and related activities, universities have also assumed the role of advocate of adult education through the establishment of pressure groups seeking more support from governments and recognition for adult literacy work.

In a continent such as Africa, in dire need of resources, universities have also worked to attract aid to supplement locally generated support for literacy. Perhaps this is more evident at the adult literacy level where associations and foundations, such as the German Adult Education Association (DVV), have consistently provided material and professional support. The DVV has supported work in Ghana, Sierra Leone, Nigeria and Zambia among others; and the International Foundation for Education and Self-Help (IFESH), which was founded in the United States of America, has provided resources for literacy work among the rural populations in Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Zimbabwe. The Ford Foundation and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada have supported an impressive volume of research aimed at improving the quality of primary education in Tanzania, Kenya and Nigeria. A product of their effort has been the extension to Africa of IMPACT (Instructional Management by Parents, Community and Teachers), to reduce the cost of primary education.

In addition to providing funds, the IDRC has sponsored the publication of authoritative monographs on educational research.

Emerging issues and new prospects for the future

A number of issues are apparent from this brief account of universities and literacy work in Africa. The first is that there is no coordination of efforts, no uniformity of approach and no harmony of operations in university literacy work. It may be explained, of course, that the university systems of work in Africa do not lend themselves to the evolution of a harmonious working relationship, given the imported traditions from Europe and North America with their conflicting approaches to literacy and outreach programmes. It is, therefore, now imperative that Africa should evolve and articulate an African approach and standardize its operations in the field of literacy.

The renewed interest of UNESCO and the International Literacy Year could be used with profit to attract the attention of governments and non-governmental organizations to assist the universities in this direction. Universities could be encouraged to increase work in the institutions where efforts have already begun, and where action has been dormant or unknown, encouragement should be given to embark on literacy drives. First, however, it is important to take an inventory of all the institutions and recognize their various stages of involvement in literacy. Secondly, it will be useful to have a record of the research capacities and contributions already made in the area of research and training by African universities. The Association of African Universities and UNESCO could assist in compiling a bibliography of research completed, work out a programme to identify the research need in the area of literacy and evolve strategies for using the universities to meet as needed.

Fourthly African universities could be encouraged to develop a climate favourable to the advancement of research and the promotion of continuing learning. At the moment most researchers in literacy are unable to acquire the equipment that could facilitate research or attract the funds required to make needed innovative research. Like their colleagues, our lecturers "spend their spare time correcting 'A' level exams or queuing for gasoline, medicine, and automobile parts." (Shaeffer and Nkinyangi, 1983:7).

It is also imperative for all the universities to work together to determine how best to contribute to the reduction of illiteracy, using the two-pronged attack of combating illiteracy through primary and adult education, adapted by UNESCO and recommended by the World Conference of the Ministers of Education. To this end, the publication of a special edition of *Prospects or Educafrica* or any journal with an interest in Africa, on universities and literacy in Africa, would be recommended. The universities can also now come in and help in the area of provision of reliable data on the state and distribution of illiteracy, at present a luxury on the continent. They should also assist with the updating of the directory of experts, institutions and training programmes.

A further emerging issue is that the universities are not yet producing enough work at a time of immense need in the field of literacy and have not shown themselves capable of meeting expected goals. African universities are also being criticised for failing to make their courses practical at all levels and for neglecting to prepare their students for the reality of living outside the campuses. Professor Jones Akinpelu, a leading adult educationalist in Nigeria, has suggested that the universities should have a fresh look at their current efforts and programmes:

"A sober and realistic appraisal would indicate that there is still a lot more to be done. Take the Mass Literacy Campaigns for example: a situation in which

only about 400 literacy organizers have so far been trained to handle million adult illiterates is to say the least grossly inadequate. The magnitude of training has to be proportionate with the enormousness of the problem to be tackled." (Akinpelu, 1988: 12-13).

It has been suggested that more training should be funded by governments and non-governmental organizations for the benefit of Africa. Akinpelu had elsewhere drawn attention to another issue, namely the lack of cooperation between university staff and the civil servants responsible for the promotion of literacy, and pointed to "good evidence of inter-institutional mutual mistrust and lack of confidence... a thinly veiled evidence of suspicion and jealousy" (Akinpelu, 1987: 52). He also described the relationship between the universities and bureaucrats as love-hate and drew attention to the cool relationship between the universities and state agencies for adult and non-formal education in Nigeria:

"There is a feeling of territoriality among some of those agencies which make them think and act as if they are self-sufficient and put the universities in their orbit at arms' length." (Akinpelu, 1988: 17).

Akinpelu believes that the way out is for the universities to ignore the civil servants whose actions and declaration have the potential to dampen the enthusiasm of the university staff. He also argues that the university staff should move ahead boldly and with courage, and enter the world of literacy efforts:

"University staff who are involved must be ready to discount the initial cynical but certainly incorrect insinuation that perhaps they (i.e. the university staff) have less than enough to do at the university, and hence are looking for something to do." They must also be ready to proffer concrete proposals for programmes identified to be of interest (to) the government." (Akinpelu, 1987:52).

He is convinced that the universities will succeed where the civil servants have failed:

"With all due respect to the calibre and the goodwill of the staff in any Ministry of Education, the implementation of a mass literacy campaign or of any other innovative project is not something that the Ministry is psychologically, technically and professionally in a position to carry out." (Akinpelu, 1987: 55).

Influenced by the successes at his base at Ibadan and his intimate knowledge of the Ministry of Education, Akinpelu has suggested that universities in Nigeria "be commissioned to carry out the literacy campaign in their designated areas of operation." Although he had pleaded that his suggestion should not be killed by "the traditional inter-institutional suspicion" to which he had earlier referred, the suggestion was not even given the serious consideration it deserved.

The involvement of UNESCO should offer an additional incentive to the universities which believe that their efforts are being deliberately impeded or even destroyed. For the universities believe that they have a mandate to participate in the literacy work in their countries. Basically, universities will always seek to use literacy programmes ideally to encourage consciousness-raising and to promote change. They will also always be more excited by programmes that provide high-quality training. The civil service remains in love with the pres-

ervation of law, order and the status quo and thus supports literacy programmes that tend to domesticate, while universities by tradition would be attracted by dynamic programmes. The extent to which universities have moved in this direction of using literacy for consciousness-raising is still to be assessed at this time of economic depression, when there is a reduction in allocation to education and general hardship in African universities.

Some countries have provided national education policies under which all institutions operate in response to the issue of the possibility that universities might be used as breeding grounds for discontent and radicalism. It is, of course, not unusual to find that some of these national policies are impracticable and face problems of implementation. They are nevertheless on the ground and backed by law. Perhaps the response to these developments in other countries would be revealing. In Canada, Michael Moses Coady (1882-1959) resigned his position at the St. Francis Xavier University to work among the poor and depressed people in Nova Scotia. Similarly, Paulo Freire once left a university post in Brazil to undertake his adult education practice. There are as yet, no known similar cases of withdrawals from university work in Africa in order to assist the poor to become liberated.

Yet it is important that universities should not be content with servicing the machinery of traditional literacy which is limited to the promotion of the 3Rs. Nor should universities simply supplement and complement the work of the agencies involved in literacy. They should do more than provide access to education for the economically and politically feeble and weak, the powerless and the ignored, the squeezed-out and the intimidated, and generally the early-leavers for the formal school system. They should evolve alternative strategies for development and explore alternative visions and aspirations of the African society.

African countries have often expressed an optimism about the efficacy of universities in helping to solve national and global problems. For example, in Nigeria, the National Universities Commission had proclaimed in its first annual report, published in 1964, its conviction that "the universities are among the most potent instruments by which our national aspirations, whether these be social, economic or cultural, can be fulfilled." In a similar vein, summarizing the potentials of universities, two adult educators from the United Kingdom, Professor J.E. Thomas and Dr. B. Elsey, who had made a detailed study of the world adult education movement and concluded that the role of the universities in the history of adult education had been crucial, have observed that "It is from the universities that most of the initiative and ideas have come, especially where they have maintained a degree of independence." (Thomas and Elsey, 1985: xxi). The place of universities in literacy could therefore be vigorously established in the interest of the illiterate, the universities, the government, society and the international community at large.



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OTHER PERSPECTIVES

"TRUST GREW AND SO DID WE" reflections from the United Kingdom

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In this chapter I want to report on three approaches to writing which have developed in adult literacy teaching and learning in this country and which offer, I think, an interesting variant on certain academic conventions. These are: the conference as a medium for writing; the use of reading aloud as celebration; and the encouragement of students to write for publication. I will also indicate briefly some of the innovatory work being done to apply co-operative learning principles to research methodology in adult literacy.

I'd like to begin by admitting to my own biases, which are two. The first is a bias towards sociable literacy, and towards the vitality of writing (other people's or my own) which results from oral discourse. (Going to conferences, for example, certainly helps me write). The second is a bias towards solitary writing; I like writing on my own—albeit after some sociable event, like a meeting, an interview, a class, a social gathering (or between conference workshops). This is not as contradictory as it sounds. In my experience, a large number of people who write need both the excitement of recognition which a conversation or meeting can bring, and the quiet retreat into a corner to draft a text. Any community of writers need to get away from as well as to get close to each other. (Teaching study skills to degree students often means teaching them when to stop reading and start writing). Having drafted the text, however, the value of a trusted reader is inestimable; and having said I prefer to write alone, I should also say that some of the writing I have most enjoyed doing has been collaborative: co-authoring articles, reports, and two books with one or more colleagues, where each writer can be, at times, the other's reader.

Conferences and writing books

The making of books is a perennial preoccupation of higher education. Academics all over the world are at this moment busy at word processors; composing research proposals, reviews, reports, theses, learned articles and chapters; marking out territory for another book, with a pile of other books and journals for company. The paper-filled room is the familiar workshop. Out there are the people who, in their workshops and libraries, will read the result.

The literacy publications I am thinking of are produced in very different settings. The writers are in the same room as their readers. They are co-equals in pursuit of a repertoire of literacies. Across the table is another writer; in a few moments, she may ask me (were I, like her, a literacy student) to read what she's written so far; later, I may ask her to do the same; later still, we may, with other writers, listen to a third, reading out the draft of the piece he is working on.

As an adult educator, and an academic, familiar with both these worlds, I am struck by the apparent gulf between them. A very different purpose and status, for instance, is awarded to the "conference", often seen as a springboard for writing and publishing activity. A number of books on literacy, like this one, have been the direct result of these professional gatherings. A collection on "Literacy, society and schooling", on many people's reading lists, for example, was the result of a conference at a Canadian university called to address the alleged "crisis" of literacy. The origin of another volume, on literacy and language studies, was the invitation to a group of "distinguished scholars" to meet for three days in a "small country inn" to discuss the issues they felt to be significant in this area. One post-conference deadline faces me and some two dozen other people this month, as we try to fulfil a book commitment made (rashly, as it now seems) in the warmth and companionship of the excellent "working weekend" on literacy which we had in Lancashire earlier this year.

Proceedings from all kinds of educational gatherings are conventionally published after the event; although, given the problems for editors in keeping their authors to deadlines, some bodies may prefer the strategy used by one organization in this country, which requires seminar leaders to submit their papers with their conference registration form by a deadline two months before it.

The conference attended by students, rather than professionals, of literacy has had a shorter history. And the kind of student conference which has developed since 1976 in Britain has thrown a different light on the academic conference-publishing habit. As do the professionals, these men and women come to the conference (with rather more sense of surprise and effort than do those of us who are paid to confer rather more often) and discuss literacy; but the writing they do for the eventual publication they write during the conference itself. I'm talking about "writing weekends": events at which adult literacy students and tutors meet together with the explicit purpose of generating, sharing, and completing writing work for later publication. Not all the editing gets done at the weekend itself; but the major effort of composing is. "*Let Loose*", the title of one of the earliest such books, contains the work of sixty people, in one form or another, all of whom spent two days in each other's company, not in a small country inn, but in a residential centre in Derbyshire. Of these, forty were women and men from different parts of the country who were currently participating as part-time students in a major educational effort: to develop their own reading and writing. The book, now out of print, was an inspiration to countless other such participants, in the articles, poems, and reports it contained of learning approaches to literacy.

Contrast these conditions for writing with those of the academic. It's true that I, now, write this also in the company of other writers; there they all are, on the floor, piled on the table: other authors, inside other books. But these are silent companions; unlike the live person in the room, they don't talk back, disagree, ask for attention, or offer ideas in mid-sentence. It's easy to see the advantages of this arrangement: these people don't interrupt. But there is an important difference to be made between the dialogue that interrupts and that which develops thinking; just as there are good reasons for ensuring that conferences are not mere platforms for speakers, but also opportunities for discussion.

Presenting a paper or taking a test?

At more formal conferences, discussions follow the "reading of a paper". This is a variant on the conventional academic lecture, in which one person has the attention of a whole group

to a previously organized set of ideas, presented orally. In this case, the speaker is reading aloud her own written paper, also to a group, also without interruption. Now, for most women and men deciding to join a literacy class, the one thing they fear that they may be asked to do is to read aloud to other people. Literacy organizers learn, from experience, to make clear at the outset that no-one is obliged, in an adult literacy class, to do this. Reading aloud, for many adults in our culture has clear associations with public humiliation. The text being read was not theirs; the performance of reading it out loud to other people was a test, done to order:

I remember a day in school, probably the worst I had when I was in school, when our form teacher called me out to read out the English lesson. What I used to always do was learn a page. I knew this page without even looking at it really. I went to his desk and he says, "Right, start reading." But he opened the book and he said, "Not that page". Obviously he must have known. So I was stuck at a new page. I was struggling through it and I got stuck at this word and he got really ratty about it. He said "I told you that word not two minutes ago." So I said, "Well, I'm sorry sir, I've forgotten it." He says, "Well right, you go down to Miss Blackburn's class."
(Mellor, 1989: p. 8).

Some years ago, having had a reading evening described to me for a publication of student writing about childbirth, I used my recollection of this description as the start of an academic article about feminism and adult literacy work. The way in which "reading aloud" was used here was certainly not like a lecture; but the position of the readers in this context was far closer to that of the author of an academic paper than to the performer of a classroom reading test:

"One evening in Hackney, East London, nearly three years ago, a hundred people came to a party. There were many kinds of food prepared, including West Indian, Turkish, and Cypriot dishes; there was drinking; there was dancing. There was an exhibition on the walls, and half way through the evening, there was a pause, to listen to some of the people there read aloud from a book. The readers were the authors; they read aloud from pages in the book which they had written. In short, it was a publishing party, of a very unusual kind. For not only were the authors presenting their written work aloud, giving voice to the printed word; they had also edited, designed and collaborated in publishing their own book. More than that, they had worked together in the conception and drafting of other people's writing as well as their own. The making of the book had engaged all of them in a process of dialogue with each other. The product was not only the book, printed and silent, but the reading from it, and the response to it." (Mace, 1983: p. 38).

Not many of us find performing our own work in public that easy; nor did all the writers who read, that evening. But a number of things certainly helped it feel more like a pleasure than a pain: not least of which was the sense of being in the company of equals. The significance of this kind of event can only be fully understood in the contrast it makes to that other kind of text-reading, with the teacher as judge and jury, and the other listeners as passive spectators. That evening in Hackney, by contrast, the listeners were collaborators; the readers were also the writers, and their audience, co-authors.

Not three months ago, I spent an evening in the company of some fifty literacy students, gathered together in response to an invitation to share some of their writing, as a

celebration for International Literacy Year. There was a choice: students were invited to come to the evening prepared to read something, but they didn't have to. They could choose, instead, to send in their writing a couple of weeks beforehand, and two of the planning groups printed these texts in enlarged form and posted them up on the walls for people to enjoy before and during the evening. Alternatively, they could bring a piece of writing, and a collection was made at the end of the evening of all the pieces brought in, taken away, duplicated, and sent back to all the participants as a magazine, a few weeks later. The striking thing about the evening, as at other such events, was how many people at first held back and said they didn't want to read their pieces aloud; but having listened to some of the other writers reading, and having joined in the applause for them, felt encouraged to take the risk of doing the same. After each reading, listeners were invited to offer any comment that occurred to them to the writer. Mostly these were gentle appreciations. Sometimes the subject of the writing led to discussion of the issue, rather than of the writing (as did one on the poll tax). Always, the effort was encouraged to ensure that every writer received one affirmative comment about the writing itself.

Public writing

There was a period, in the late 1970s, when every literacy scheme in the country seemed to be publishing student writing and holding reading evenings. Now, however, as one adult educator has put it, there seems to be a "sustained attack" on the "participative humanist model of literacy work" (which she saw paralleling "the attack on liberal education and the centralisation of the curriculum"). The last national list of all titles in print from adult literacy projects which was published in 1982 listed 120 titles. Publications of the national Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit regularly stress the importance given at national policy level to student writing. But no national list of student publications has appeared since 1982; and "Write First Time", the national organization promoting and publishing writing on a regular basis from 1975 was closed down in 1985. Grant officers have even been heard calling student writing weekends "old hat", and overworked and underfunded local literacy workers have less and less time for the work it takes to inspire and coordinate the idea of students working to edit and publish their own writing.

Yet, here in the post is a new publication from Dublin. It has got everything in it: an introduction which welcomes the reader in to the secret of how the book was composed and edited; a range of writing from "A letter to my son" to a series of pieces on "school days", "learning", and "reading and writing". There is a whole section on "Organising writing events", some political pieces, and some poetry. It is beautifully illustrated with photographs. Here is a piece by Martina, from County Kildare:

"Well, I was sitting here this morning talking or should I say listening to the girls and the lads talking about their experiences in their lives. I was very interested in what they all had to say. One of the subjects that came up was broken marriages. It was great to see how well they were able to talk about it. They were saying how the children love the ground their dads walk on when they come to see them and how they feel a bit sad about it as they (the mothers that is) have given their lives to the children and they drop them when he comes in. I myself am from a broken home."

(Buckley, et.al.1989, p. 36).

The book has a proud title: *Given the chance we can do it*. It is a beautifully crafted collection; and it is the creation of a collective writing process by adult literacy students. It is no coincidence that the rhythm and clarity of the writing reads as if Martina is speaking to us. She was speaking, during the weekend, before or during the act of actually composing the written text. The result on the page is bound to still hold something of the sound of a voice, as well as the look of printed symbols. She is writing, not only to her title, 'Growing up in a broken home', but to the subject of writing itself. Her story, and the inspiration to tell it, came from being a listener to the stories of the others.

A very old friend and distinguished adult educationalist, Ruth Lesirge, made the point to me when I was speaking to her about this paper, that this particular method of generating writing in literacy work encourages above all not only a skill in presenting (either in writing or speech) but a particular kind of listening. It is listening which makes our ear sensitive to language, to narrative and structure, to argument and sub-argument; but it is also listening which allows us to check those who listen to us, and ensure that we feel prepared to take the risk of letting them hear what we have to say. In 1985, a colleague and I, planned and taught a four-day residential summer school for women "fresh start" students in which, among other things, the women wrote and shared writing. The introduction to the magazine which resulted says something about the value, to writers, of this kind of listening:

"We came here to learn and share experiences. In this magazine, we are trying to show some of the ways in which we learned.

The women who came were from different backgrounds and cultures; of different ages and colour.... We hope these writings will evoke memories for us, and give others a glimpse into the lives of the twenty-four women who came together on this course.

We began as strangers to each other. As we talked and listened in our groups, in rooms, dining hall, on a boat, on the lawn—trust grew, and so did we."
(Mc Pherson: 1985, p. 2).

It is oral work of this kind which gives buoyancy and flow of a particular kind to the finished written work: the springy step of a writer trusting her reader.

There is a similar feeling, of course, to those academic conference reports which publish, not the written paper presented or sent in later, but the verbatim transcripts of their author speaking at the event. This extract from the published report of a conference I attended, for example, takes me straight back to the hall of some three hundred people where I listened to the voice of the speaker: and for readers who were not there, the particular style of the written language offers an immediate sense of that audience, and her sense of their attention:

"It is inspiring to take part in these discussions. I can remember the days when literacy was regarded as a matter for schoolmasters and technocrats; I can remember the time when literacy and liberation began to be talked about, but as a slogan for people in libraries and not really in relation to people whose lives it affected. I'm therefore very encouraged by the theme of this conference, the attitude of the people who organized it, and the numbers of you who are here today."
(Bown: 1990, p. 5).

Research and literacy

So far, I have tried to relate the two literacy practices of reading aloud and publishing writing with parallel practices in the academic world. It seems to me important to bring together these two contexts precisely because, in our culture, they have been held apart for so long. The pinnacle of academic achievement, the single-author published book, has also been the weapon of oppression, relying on deeply rooted cultural assumptions of the virtues of individualism, standardized language, and competition. The major contribution of adult literacy practice in this country over the last two decades has been to make these assumptions explicit, and to challenge them. The research activities of academics in sociolinguistics, social history, education and anthropology have all given strength to these efforts. This coalescence of research interests with practice is one of the most interesting developments in this country in recent years; it seems timely, in my view, for these practice-and-theory debates in the meanings and uses of literacy to be made central to the development of practice-and-theory in university education.

For, as I have suggested elsewhere, much is already being done to make the work of theoretical research in linguistics, particularly, "accessible to a popular readership"; not by "writing down" to a readership conceived of as capable only of simple conceptual thought, but by disciplining the writing to make clear just what the concepts mean to the writer. (Six years of research went into a recently published volume on language diversity; a serious piece of academic work, examining historically, and linguistically, the nature of language variation and power structures in this country. The purpose of the work guided the method by which the study was carried out: namely, to produce, as a publication, a resource for study by users of the many different varieties of English that thrive in our society now. The published result is accessible, linguistically and typographically, precisely because it was researched with the intended readership: people who are deeply familiar with the issues of language and power which it addresses—adult literacy students themselves.

Researchers in literacy, too, have begun to apply the same principles of co-operative learning at work in the adult literacy classroom to the business of conducting a research inquiry into the meanings and uses of literacy itself. The aim is to find ways of ensuring that participants in adult literacy education are agents, not objects of research. The Research and Practice in Adult Literacy (RaPaL) network began in this country in 1985, after the first national conference of this title held at Lancaster University in 1984, and has held two national student-researcher conferences on "Doing research". These developments are part of the consistent principle, in adult literacy teaching, that mature people with years of conviction that they "can't read and write" have an equal right with others to be in charge of the questions to be asked. In evaluating them, it is important to examine the effectiveness of the methodology as much as the validity of the findings. If literacy students are to decide the questions, how well does the process of making those decisions work? What questions do they suggest that were out of reach of other researchers? What differences did their relationship to the subject of research make to the way in which it could be explored?

RaPaL publishes a regular bulletin featuring articles, reports and reviews of literacy practice and research; and brings together students and teachers in higher education with students and teachers in "basic" education. The key feature of RaPaL (like the National Federation of Voluntary Education Schemes, or Write First Time, also bodies committed to active student participation) is that there is always an open commitment at meetings and

conferences to "watch the language"; anyone who begins to talk jargon or speaks in a particularly complicated language is politely asked to make themselves clear.

An important dimension of recent RaPaL debates, and a growing area for research, has been the issue of literacy practices in the academic institution itself. The system of higher education in this country is still dominated by its history. Originally a male community of scholars, it resisted long and hard against women's entrance to it. Now, despite itself, it has to overcome its resistance to students who do not have the conventional qualifications of higher certificates obtained at the age of eighteen. A more or less energetic outreach or marketing strategy for mature students has been on the university agenda for some years. The business of reforming the teaching habits and the institution's expectations of students has barely begun. Adult literacy work, with its own traditions of collaborative learning, co-operative writing, and an insistence on the entitlement of students to question and re-think their own position as learners, has good experience to contribute to that process.

Reading and writing are activities which, at any level, for any purpose, can be the source of either pain and struggle or pleasure and excitement. The hushed library with solitary scholars is still an important sanctuary. But it is also, for too many people, an exclusion zone, insisting on silent, rather than oral, exchange between writers. ("If you wish to have a conversation would you mind going outside?") Adult literacy teachers are all too familiar with the student who, with limited time in the weekly class, wants to leave the discussion and get on with the "real work" of putting pen to paper. We have also been privileged observers to moments of inspiration such as Martina's, at the Dublin conference, who, from listening to others, found a voice for herself. We all need the quiet; but we also gain, more than we are always prepared to admit, from the talk.

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OTHER PERSPECTIVES

LITERACY, THE UNIVERSITY AND STRUGGLE

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In most countries, universities are facing different types of crises and, at the same time, the number of illiterates is growing. It is estimated that there are around one billion traditional illiterates and an indefinite number of new functional illiterates. The demographic trends can indicate an increasing number of illiterates if fundamental structural changes for more equal international relations and within countries do not take place.

Basic research is needed to see how it is possible to make full use of these possible structural changes. The reconversion of military industries and the use of new technologies for peaceful purposes are two of the most needed areas for theoretical and applied research. New means and new literates can be the result. Universities can play a relevant role in this respect because they can contribute through an interdisciplinary approach to new educational policies and actions.

But why is there a special worldwide interest in literacy today? Are governments becoming more humane? Is international democracy working? Or are concrete economic interests stimulating new literacy policies at national and international levels? Maybe, the "salarisation" of a part of the world population, which was outside the formal labour market, can be one of the reasons of this new concern for literacy. The new workers need to have a formal initial training which qualifies them for the jobs that are offered to them. This "salarisation" is accompanied in some industrialized countries by a "de-salarisation" of another part of the workers who are shifting from the formal to the non-formal labour market (self-employment, unemployment, etc.).

Universities

In many countries, the crisis of the university system is a crisis of growth. The number of traditional students and of new types of learners is growing rapidly. There is a lack of organizational answers, not only to the numbers of students but also to the specificity of the demands of the newcomers. All ages and different social and cultural groups are interested in university learning as well as in other types of learning. Unfortunately, universities through their staff, curricula, time and space organization, are not always ready to welcome the adult population, literate or illiterate, which did not have the previous opportunity to undertake university studies.

Literacy is seen by the university as a new moral duty but it is possible to see literacy activities in a very different perspective. Pure illiterates constitute one-fifth of mankind and

those who may be termed functional illiterates are even numerous. This population is not marginal as far as quantity is concerned and also as far as its contribution is concerned in relation to the cultural and economic inputs to our societies. We forget, often, that illiterates are producing the conditions for the economic performance of many countries in the northern and in the southern hemispheres. If we look at the problem in this perspective, literacy is becoming a relevant topic for the university as a whole and not only for the faculty of education where it is still confined.

Universities have also to take into consideration the unequal international division of education and particularly of university education. Literacy is strongly related to a better equality between countries and between social groups within given countries. It is very difficult to educate people through the initial formal education and to keep them literate if universities are preparing only a very limited number of highly-qualified people available for the economic development and if many of these very limited number are obliged to leave their countries to find jobs which correspond to their qualifications.

Is a new international educational order suggested? Maybe, it is necessary. Otherwise, every twenty years, declarations are proclaimed to eradicate illiteracy within fifteen or twenty years' time and an evaluation of this eradication is never done just because the promise was not kept. We have, at the same time, to constantly redefine the concept and the function of literacy.

The illiterates

All generalizations have to be avoided. Illiteracy is just one attribute of man concerning his relations with his environment. (And this environment varies.) Illiterates in a non-literacy environment are not an excluded population as they are in a literacy environment. In many countries, where formal education was not available for everybody, paradoxically literacy created exclusion for those who didn't have the opportunity to become literate.

A moralistic approach leads to the perception of illiterates as a social problem and not as people who are relevant resources for their own countries and for the world community. Should the universities reinforce a moralistic and charitable vision of illiterates or on the contrary, do they have to inform our societies about the relevant culture and the significant productive contribution illiterates actually make to our societies. If we analyse the history of mankind, we can see the contribution of illiterate people who were the majority of our ancestors and who certainly contributed to human development.

Illiterates are often cultivated people in the arts as well as in the traditional technologies. Universities can inform about these rich cultural traditions which are still an important, useful reference in the daily lives of hundreds of millions of people. Oral culture is a relevant part of our modern culture but usually the oral culture of illiterates doesn't have the same status as the oral culture of literate people (Belpassi, 1985). Bilingual populations which have an oral culture related to one language are considered illiterates if they don't write one foreign language. But can we consider these people illiterate in the social and cultural sense just because their mother tongue is not yet a written language?

Universities have also to study the specific problem of literacy concerning non-alphabetic languages which present particular difficulties. This exercise can be very useful not only

for a comparative language analysis but also for a comparative cultural analysis. (Peerean and Holender, 1990).

Is literacy education functional only to the labour market or is it oriented towards the socialization of knowledge? This question can be the concern, not only of the philosopher, but also of educational policy makers when they ask the university to make social and cultural contributions.

"An illiterate adult is not a goof; she/he is intelligent, sensible and mature. The only missing link is that she/he does not have access to the print media and lacks, therefore, an easy access to a wider world of information, communication and skills." (Mishra, 1989).

If we want to understand communities where illiteracy is still the norm, we have to understand the full culture of the community and to see the different networks of communication and the social organization of these communities. For example, "the indigenous Quechua communities keep equalitarian, democratic structures which have their origins in both pre-feudal and pre-slavery socio-economic formations." (Bambula Diaz, 1983)> Our university researchers have to investigate also the use of language which can be different in various contexts.

"The literacy of pre-literate adults introduced for the first time the idea that the word can have an independent existence from the context and from the person and that names and things are not necessarily the same. Similarly, the language loses part of its function as human temporal interaction and assumes permanent and immutable characteristics." (King, 1984).

If we shift from the traditional community to the illiterates who are living in the outskirts of our gigantic cities in the North as well as in the South, the relation between literacy and daily life is pretty different. Very often, illiteracy is related to the status of unemployed migrants, and of different types of excluded persons. In that case, the most relevant problem is not illiteracy but the socio-economic conditions of these illiterates.

Economic dynamics

University economists as well as scientists and technologists can help a lot, not only to analyse the relationship between economic development and illiteracy but also to anticipate some possible alternatives. It is clear that the debts of the southern countries are strongly connected with limited investments in the productive as well as in the formal educational systems. Relevant work to improve literacy all over the world is that which leads to the liberation of southern countries from the debt burden. University researchers can also work on the implication of technological transfer on the economy of many countries. University researchers cannot be indifferent to the use of new technologies. Social scientists are relevant actors in the process of modernity as critical contributors to this process. Their absence or their complicity in technological transformations do not take into consideration the human dimension can be a disaster for the development of many countries. The cultural function of universities is to keep the cultural heritage of a country, to preserve the human values of solidarity and to encourage the collective creativity of communities and societies. In this process of fast modern change, universities can become an instrument and a relevant cultural reference for the populations who are affected by this change and who are its actors.

Scientific and technological transformation in productive systems have also some influence on the use of the oral and the written cultures and languages in productive life. Oral and visual culture is as relevant as the written one. In this sense, literacy can no longer be confused with the alphabet and previously illiterate populations can be easily introduced into the new productive systems without passing through the traditional formal educational process. Naturally, this easier way can be twofold. On the one hand, it can make access of illiterates to production easier and on the other hand, it can manipulate their participation in productive activities because of their lack of the cultural understanding of the new setting in which they are invited to become fast producers.

Rural sectors are the most exposed to the debt problem. And most of today's illiterates are in rural areas, even if they did not take advantage of the previous borrowing. The rural sector is also paying for the modernisation of agricultural production because of the reduction of peasants who do not have access to alternative jobs. University researchers can study and make proposals for the rural population and for those who are neither integrated into rural production nor into the urban productive sectors. Illiteracy concerns both populations.

Involvement of universities

University activities can be forecast at least in four types of activities: (a) research; (b) training; (c) counselling in labour and educational policies; (d) production and job creation.

Research

Fundamental research concerning literacy is significant in scale. It has to be intercultural, interdisciplinary, intersectoral. It needs to be intercultural because it is necessary to know both the culture of the literates as well as that of the illiterates; it needs to be interdisciplinary because the world of work, the cultural framework, the communication universe and the pedagogical aspects have to be taken into consideration; it needs to be intersectoral because educators have to be related to the productive structures as well as to the social and cultural structures.

I would suggest some possible areas for research, as examples: (i) history of literacy and illiteracy; (ii) the context of illiteracy; (iii) the educational systems and exclusions, drop-outs, educational inequalities.

History of literacy and illiteracy. The growing interest for the history of education stimulates only a little the histories of literacy and illiteracy. These histories can contribute to enlighten the contradictory historical process of education and to reinforce cultural and educational identity among people. Many failures in literacy policies and activities have their origin in the fact that illiterate people were represented as if they had no cultural and educational history. The history of illiterates' culture gives a new dimension to the more classical history of educational ideas. University historians, and not only historians of education, have a lot to say concerning oral culture and education, history of culture and history of science and technology among illiterate populations.

The context of illiteracy. Specific and global literacy policies are operating very often in a social and cultural vacuum as far as the knowledge and information of literacy educators

are concerned. Research is needed to help these educators to understand positive and negative learning possibilities of people confronted with new technologies, poor living conditions in the suburban areas, starvation in many rural areas, family ties and learning, unemployment, chosen or imposed migration, physical or mental deficiencies. Educational literacy policies and activities must take these concrete and existential factor into account.

The educational systems and exclusions, drop-outs, educational inequalities. Our educational systems are the most effective producers of illiterates for various reasons excluded. Many children, youth and adults are excluded from access: many educational systems seem to be powerful instruments to reinforce educational inequalities. Policies of positive discrimination at international and comparative levels, as well as at regional, national and societal levels, deserve to be carefully studied and implemented to prevent illiteracy.

Training

University professors are not often prepared to tackle and develop literacy activities. The university tradition is limited in this respect. There is a great risk of providing training which is too abstract. University professors can learn from field experiences within the social and cultural setting where illiterates live, think, produce, fight and advance. Maybe these professors can learn from these experiences and also change their educational practice.

Teachers, researchers, organizers in the field of literacy are asking for training beyond the purely pedagogical and organizational skills. As a matter of fact, the first literacy-related activity is to prepare primary and secondary teachers to keep all of their pupils in their classes and courses and not to eliminate them on very doubtful grounds such as competency, qualification or fitness. The drop-out phenomenon has various origins, but schools are always partially responsible.

Literacy policies have to be part of broader life-long education policies. Therefore, educators in their different functions have to be prepared to run open education systems, sophisticated educational media, creative and multifaceted educational delivery systems.

The university itself has to develop most of the training activities for literacy educators with a variety of media. Residential educational activities for these educators are becoming quite rare because of geographical distance and financial cost.

Is the educational relation between university, literacy educators and illiterates just one way? Two-way experiences can be profitable to the universities as well. Both literacy educators and illiterates can bring relevant knowledge to the universities. They do represent a relevant part of the population with which the university is supposed to work. I did have the opportunity to be associated with a union of migrant workers composed of literates and illiterates. On several occasions I asked the leader to lecture to the students of the university where I am teaching. He provided a realistic account of the living conditions of the workers both in the host country and in their villages. He explained very clearly how these workers were acting and reacting in their very unprivileged conditions. He stressed the importance of an increasing participation of their own movement in educational activities, as a result of a broader participation in the social, political, economic and cultural life in both countries of emigration and immigration. This leader was a former illiterate in his youth and he knew forced labour in the colonial era. New thinking and new areas of research emerged as a result of this guest speaker's discussion with my students.

Counselling in labour and educational policies

The literacy educational world is very rich in experience. Many times the most prominent educational theoreticians and practioners start as literacy educators. But still we have so many illiterate people. Countries and the international community need more global educational policies. Illiteracy is a structural phenomenon and not an episodic one. Therefore, it is to be treated at a structural level and not only at the existential one. Universities can help if they want and are asked to work on the global educational systems and not only to give their limited sectoral contributions. Here again the cultural role of the university is at stake. Are university professors just an instrument to maintain the systems as they are or can they contribute to give more global answers to the social, economic and therefore educational injustices of our contemporary societies?

New economic policies at the national, regional and international levels, are needed as well as new literacy policies integrated in life-long education perspectives. But universities and ministries of education forget to relate literacy policies with broader economic, social and educational policies. And illiterates remain the concern of powerless educators.

Production and job creation

Illiteracy, literacy and production have several relations and ties. Illiterates are often used because of their limited power concerning union rights; illiterates are considered cheap labour and workers with no pretences. In this perspective, they can wait a long time and maybe literacy education will not be provided for them. But if the productive structures are changing and educational needs are rising, illiterates have chances to become literate. Illiterates are not confined to remote communities, some of them travel and the media show them alternatives concerning social and productive life. They are often dissatisfied with being illiterate and universities can contribute either to their enlightenment or to their further exclusion.

Universities can be active in literacy activities not only through training but also through the creation of new jobs. One of the cultural roles of the universities is to stimulate cultural interest within society and within the academic world. New interests often mean new jobs related to the social and cultural life. Creation of new jobs means availability of jobs for the unemployed (and usually you find a lot of illiterates among them).

More directly, the training of one billion illiterates means the creation of hundreds of thousands of jobs in the northern and the southern countries, and within several sectors of production: construction of educational buildings, culture, education, communication, etc. The universities themselves can be active in the creation of some of these new jobs, as well as in the definition of new educational profiles.

Propositions

Universities can be active at local, national and international levels. They are often active as far as technology and economic life are concerned but very seldom at literacy level. We will try to explore some possibilities at these three levels.

At local level

Population dynamics have to be analyzed. Traditional illiterates, natives and migrants, are joined by newcomers, the new technological illiterates and nationals who master only the local national language. Universities can study these new emerging literacy needs and try to contribute, through institutional and community structures, to overcome these educational deficiencies. At the same time universities, directly or indirectly, can associate the global population, illiterates included, with cultural creational activities, as well as with research.

At the national level

Universities can carry out interdisciplinary research to carefully study problems like unemployment, exclusion, marginalization which are creating or maintaining illiteracy in very different countries; they can study racism, resistance to intercultural exchanges, symbolic and direct violence, origins of isolation and deprivation of the relevant part of the population in the cultural and educational life.

Teachers and literacy educators ask for help and their difficulties have more social and cultural origins than pedagogical ones. The impoverishment of many urban and suburban areas make literacy a very difficult task, and national policies are needed because the local communities are often powerless; community participation is necessary but largely insufficient to tackle these major problems which have national and international dimensions.

At international level

One billion traditional illiterates, and the even more larger number of functional illiterates ask for economic and social policies and cooperation at international level. Two-fifths of mankind is not a marginal problem or a minor accident in the functioning of the social and educational structures. Some national states cannot alone face alternative policies to overcome these educational deficiencies. Humanitarian aid is not really an answer either. We cannot create new wealth from nothing. We need to reconvert part of the world's wealth into economic, social and educational activities which are needed by this relevant part of our world population.

Universities can study the problem of the reconversion of war production into peace production as well as the new patterns of consumption of the wealthy countries to grant the possibility of survival of the people who do not yet have the chance to buy needed goods for survival. Our modern societies require creative researchers to study alternative models and paradigms to make the lives of more than five billion people on earth comfortable. This is more than an utopia, it is a necessity. Universities cannot be alone in this venture; the cultural and productive institutions, as well as the research centres will be associated if there is a will at national and international levels to discuss seriously the problem of education.

In this perspective more specific pedagogical actions have a meaning within university life. New curriculum has to be provided for literacy and adult educators, to be more consistent with the needs of illiterates. Creativity in educational methodology will be welcome by educators and their students: independent learning, distance education, group

study, experiential learning will provide useful contributions to flexible literacy policies and actions, taking into account all possibilities for residential and open learning.

All adults can become literacy educators, and universities can provide educational skills especially to those people who have possibilities to work with people who are interested in literacy activities. Skilled workers, technicians, teachers, media personnel, medical doctors, nurses, etc. deal everyday with people willing to learn and the boundaries between literates and illiterates are not always so visible.

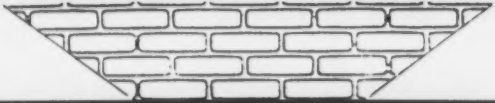
Maybe universities have to become permanent learning centres. Is it asking too much? Or is not this the main function of the university?

Who is learning?

Several years ago I was teaching in a teachers' college in Bouaké, Ivory Coast. I went with my students to meet the villagers who were living a few miles away from the teachers' college. Most of the villagers were illiterate but I don't know who learned the most. My students and I better understood why we were doing research and training ourselves, the culture of our college was enriched and got a more precise sense. Unfortunately, very often, artificial barriers prevent universities to communicate with the culture and the creativity of ordinary people. My students and I learned a lot from the villagers. I hope the villagers were able to do likewise.

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SUGGESTIONS FOR UNIVERSITY POLICY AND ACTION ON LITERACY

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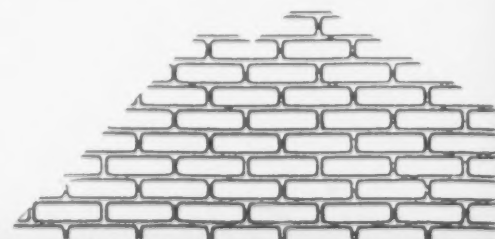
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■ It seems to me that several points should be emphasized at this roundtable on the university and literacy, some of which have already been mentioned by members of the panel. My contribution is based particularly on the experience of PRELUDE, of which I am the scientific co-ordination director. I should, therefore, like to begin with at least a brief outline of our network.

The PRELUDE network

The PRELUDE network, formed as a result of discussion of the social usefulness of higher education at the Eighth General Assembly of AUPELF (Association des Universités Partiellement ou Entièrement de Langue Française) in Brussels in November-December 1984, is an association of several hundred voluntary research workers supported by the institution to which they belong and spread over four continents (Africa, the Americas, Europe). It aims to devise and put into practice co-development strategies along North-South, South-North (not to be confused with the first) South-South and North-North axes of co-operation. The concept of development implicit in the idea of co-development involves a "passage from one to one's self at a higher level through rejection or organic or historic assimilation of internal and external elements"(1), as Joseph Ki Zerbo pointed out during the first PRELUDE forum held in Dakar in March 1987.

A basic characteristic of the network is its approach, whose criteria encourage social communication and creativity. In other words, with the aims of co-development in mind, the approach sets out to provide common points of reference for the communication process and ways ahead for the creative process.(2) The chief criteria are: partnership (between researchers, and between researchers and people in the non-academic, non-scientific sectors of society); the broadest possible interdisciplinarity (between the so-called exact or natural sciences and technical sciences and the so-called social sciences); giving priority to concrete problems (preferably in key sectors such as energy, health, nutrition, housing, communication and new technologies); evaluation; interrelationships between training and research; combining scientific and technological strategies with people's lifestyles and ways of doing things.



Aspects of university policy and action

Drawing on PRELUDE's experience, I shall now discuss, in no particular order, some aspects and urgent needs of cultural policy and action involving universities.

Beyond the current discussions on literacy work and illiteracy, it would be good for universities and their social role in development for them to become involved in what is going on now. This means giving new impetus to literacy work in order to give everyone, whatever their age and wherever they live, more effective control individually and collectively over their relationship to their physical and human environment, making allowances for cultural differences, of course. Paradoxically, in the North, in this era of new technologies, the problem of illiteracy is resurfacing, (3), what is usually called "functional illiteracy" (for example, inability to fill in forms or read a tax demand) being quite a widespread phenomenon. In the South, overall figures for the 1980s show that one out of three adults is illiterate.(4) As the proportion of children attending school decreases, standards of living, already very low, can only get worse.(5)

At university level, encouraging literacy implies rethinking ideas on academic and scientific freedom. Following documents published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the World Health Organization and the General Assembly of AUPELF, referred to above, PRELUDE has expressed the view that university autonomy is more firmly guaranteed and academic and scientific freedoms more strongly supported if universities, their teachers and research-workers, join in partnership with authorities or individuals outside the academic world.

Working to improve literacy also means upgrading local knowledge and know-how, which would have major consequences for universities' responsibilities and their teaching and research practices.

The PRELUDE conference in Brussels and Liège in February 1989 on "Pesticides and drugs in animal health: A North-South meeting of technologies" is quite clear on one point: true knowledge must be able to link speech and action and true knowledge must be able to relate usefully to other knowledge, either in opposition or in dialogue. This conference's desire for efficiency and realism sprang from two sources. On the one hand, it was considering western veterinary science as applied in both North and South, with its tools, pesticides and drugs as well as its economic, anthropological, cultural and environmental problems. On the other hand, it was looking at traditional medicine with its healers and medicinal plants - "practices from another age that are giving ground to an art of healing larded with western science, or yielding 'magic' results where western technical skill misses the mark or hits too hard?" (7)

Action in favour of literacy also implies that those concerned should be able to acquire the techniques of expression (spoken and/or written) in the context of their work and/or life. Activities of socio-cultural interest should, therefore, be devised alongside the technical projects, programmes or initiatives of a development-based economy. It is particularly important that new ways of teaching (or re-teaching) reading, writing and calculation skills should involve such activities. For learning is not merely a means of acquiring technical know-how, it also involves fundamental cultural values and ideas. (8)

With their creative, critical and evaluative functions, universities have a crucial role

to play, not only in devising and teaching new techniques (especially in the context of teacher training and life-long education), but also in social engineering and innovation (in this case, particularly in the field of teaching materials). It is up to the universities to intervene at an early stage in scientific and technological procedures in order to investigate underlying options and to encourage consideration of the end-users' questions which, while often valid with regard to substance, are generally not admissible from a technical point of view. 9

In view of the cultural significance of literacy and the social nature of any evaluation of its effectiveness, taking these issues into consideration is one of universities' clear responsibilities. However, this assumes that universities, as an integral part of society, are actually taking part in the development of that society; in other words, universities, from the professors to the students (through the preparation of theses or dissertations and through their active participation in literacy programmes) need, in many cases, to change their attitudes and agree to put a good deal of time and effort into this sort of cultural work, which is less gratifying than, for instance, contributing to prestigious publications or high-level scientific meetings.

This would imply challenging the usual criteria for internal recognition within universities and more specifically, the factors on the basis of which the advancement of a professional career is decided.

The criteria for external recognition could also be severely upset. In connection with Africa, Jacques Bugnicourt stressed at the conference on "Pesticides and drugs in animal health" mentioned earlier the importance of defining a kind of "rural research assistant" and the outlook for "joint research".

Rural Africans possess a wealth of tradition knowledge whose value, and even originality, compared to the knowledge of other continents, we shall be able to recognize in a few years' time. This knowledge, in the same way as Western knowledge, is also a coherent system, and not every rural African is a researcher in the sense of developing local knowledge and know-how. Working with rural researchers does not only support development but is also a form of recognition of the contribution made by different cultures, giving something back to the population concerned. In contrast to what frequently happens with many modern scientists, rural researchers are never cut off from their cultural group.

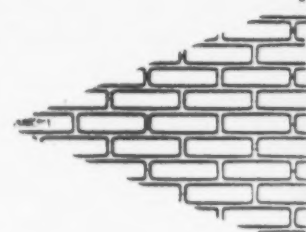
Jacques Bugnicourt concludes: "Bringing rural researchers into training programmes is a *sine qua non* of reforming the educational system in African countries There is no doubt that this rebuilding of education.... requires the involvement of researchers trained locally, 'modern' researchers, and rural people. A new form of training should include both consideration of daily life and environmental and technological research". (10)

This leads me to stress, following Ettore Gelpi's contribution to this roundtable, the importance for universities of taking oral skills into account. As Martine Poulain points out, writing is not the only form of social communication. (11) Words and gestures are also part of everyday communication. The so-called cultural level of a person cannot be measured, and certainly not measured exclusively, by the yardstick of his or her proficiency in writing. "Speech has a basic role in relationships with others and with a culture", say Michel de Certeau and Luce Giard. There is an urgent need to analyse the workings of speech "bringing up to date the old principles of rhetoric and recognizing the legitimate and decisive role of speech in the constitution of a social group, even in a society using the written word and

computers, both at the administrative and political levels (providing public information) and in the daily life of a neighbourhood".(12)

For example, we should never forget that African oral traditions make up what Wass Mbilizi, echoing the title of a work by Umberto Eco calls "an open text". (13) For this Zairean author, enlarging the notion of text to include material from oral traditions should allow us to redefine the links, which he says are direct links, uniting present generations of Africans to their ancestors, "the authors of oral texts".

If the full social and cultural relevance of speech is appreciated, bearing in mind that science is a part of culture and not the other way round, then universities must try to be more responsible in their attitude and scrutinize possibilities of lucidity and action.



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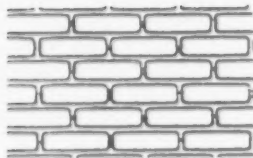
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REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS

UNESCO ROUNDTABLE: THE UNIVERSITY AND LITERACY

42nd International Conference
on Education, Geneva,
Friday, 7 September 1990

I. Introduction

International Literacy Year 1990 is an opportunity to renew commitments to ensuring a fully literate world. The two principal messages of this year are: (a) that literacy matters and that it matters greatly and (b) that the provision of education is, above all, a public responsibility but there is a role for everyone and, regarding this Roundtable, for the university, in ensuring this basic human right. Basic literacy and numeracy may not constitute in and of themselves a guarantee to a better quality of life for all but they are definitely a crucial part of individual development and social participation.

At present, more than 965 million adults in the world have no access to the written word. More than 130 million children of school-age have never seen the inside of a classroom. In addition the quality of schooling has been seriously compromised over the past 15 years due to the economic crisis. In the changing world political climate, it is more than ever urgent to place education amongst national priorities. In order to do so, it is necessary to examine the contribution that might and should be made by every level and form of education.

This Roundtable took a critical look at the role of universities with respect to several literacy-related issues. Experts from each major region of the world examined the role of universities in:

* *research on:* literacy acquisition teaching of reading and writing achievement, mea-

surement and assessment, languages of instruction, equality of opportunity;

* *teacher training:* training of specialists and tutors, research on appropriate adult learning methods, policy and reform for second chance opportunities, research on adult literacy and professional prospects;

* *out-reach and extension programmes in adult literacy and basic education provided by universities.*

In some regions of the world, universities have developed major literacy research centres which look at literacy issues in a comparative and international perspective. Others have highly-developed adult basic education services for their local communities. In many instances, however, education in general, and literacy in particular have had low status and priority at university level. This roundtable sought to take a first critical look at the international situation and then suggest areas in which universities can and should develop their own commitment to a fully literate world.

II. Trends in the Arab States

It was stressed that universities today have to perform three essential functions:

- *teaching*
- *research*
- *community services*

with regard to literacy issues. All of these could benefit from the enhanced use of networking as a means of consolidating efforts and thus achieving more far-reaching results.

University teaching is the function through which the institution is able to prepare needed cadres, disseminate knowledge and enhance cultural heritage. Faculties of education are the institutions responsible for the preparation and training of various categories of educational personnel including those needed for literacy and post-literacy activities. In the Arab States, one of the most important obstacles confronting the intensification of literacy and post-literacy campaigns is the shortage of personnel qualified in this field of activities, particularly teachers. So far, only a few institutions provide such a training. Moreover, the present ineffectiveness of literacy activities can also be attributed to the dependence on primary education personnel to carry out these activities, in spite of the difference in needed skills and in the objectives of the two educational levels.

Research is needed to perform various tasks for the benefit of literacy activities; i.e., evaluation of the magnitude of the problem, suggestion of new strategies and methods to deal with it, particularly in the design of relevant contents and materials, follow-up and evaluation of campaigns and implemented programmes and compilation of feedback information to revise the adopted course of action. Furthermore, research workers, professors, researchers, etc. should be in charge of implementing innovations in literacy activities, such as utilizing mass media organs in accelerating literacy and post-literacy programmes. So far, research efforts are insufficient and greater coordination is required between research centres, ministries of education and universities.

The community service function of the university can play an important role in promoting public awareness of the negative impact of illiteracy on the whole society and individuals.

Authorities and professors need to participate in the public lectures and forums which

tackle illiteracy issues and their impact on socioeconomic development. A massive investment of mass media in these public awareness campaigns is indispensable.

Another important aspect is the involvement of university professors, in their consultative capacities, in the actual implementation and evaluation of literacy and post-literacy campaigns.

Also, community services require the university's physical facilities to be used in the conduct of literacy and post-literacy classes. Such an arrangement might help in making up for the shortage in the physical facilities at the disposal of literacy authorities.

In conclusion, the linkages between the university and literacy, while fully recognized, necessitate reinforcement so as to tackle the magnitude of the problems at hand.

III. Trends in the Asia/Pacific Region

The importance of community efforts was stressed in this region as well, since this strategy was considered to be one which brought fuller understanding of problems and thus could generate more effective and innovative solutions.

While noting the variety of education systems and levels of development which must co-exist in this particular region, it was felt that the capacity of universities to cope with such challenges is more likely to be a function of whether they have recognized or might recognize, the relevance of their mission and work to the rapid and often dramatic changes occurring in the societies and cultures which nurture them. It is also likely to relate to what action they take when such changes are recognized.

Nevertheless, against remarkable diversity in the language, population concentrations, culture, economics and politics of the region, there have been some outstanding achievements made. Some of these have resulted from cooperative initiatives amongst universities, includ-

ing dynamic action in the area of pilot projects. These have fostered cooperative arrangements linking universities in different countries. Other efforts have been centred in the realm of distance learning.

What these initiatives have in common is a commitment by the participating parties to exercise a flexibility in a perception of where the work of a university lies and how best it might orient its action accordingly.

Another crucial domain is that of the impact of the new information and communication technologies, particularly in the research activity of certain universities in specific contexts. Moreover technology should be defined so as to include the way in which equipment and materials can be used and the learning experience itself. Such a view can have long-term consequences in terms of the use of technology in both literacy programmes for adults in urban areas and those designed for rural communities.

IV. Trends in Latin America and the Caribbean

The university/literacy linkage is certainly evident in several domains notably teacher training, distance education and staff development.

Interestingly, it was felt that literacy initiatives are mainly based on individual staff involvement interest rather than as a fully endorsed university activity. To this end, there is a clear need to attribute intellectual rigour, which is typical of university work, to the literacy field.

Specific areas in which the university might be involved include:

- * *research to establish regional and individual country estimates of basic and functional literacy;*

- * *the dissemination of sociological research already carried out which would have an impact upon materials development and the medium of instruction in specific language contexts;*

- * *research on the foundations of literacy in the region including the role played by home and community;*

- * *case studies to identify new learning strategies;*

- * *new emphasis on preventive literacy measures especially at the primary school level;*

- * *enhanced uses of distance learning techniques. Finally it was proposed that the university could work in partnership with other concerned and competent bodies, such as NGOs, as the sharing of experience and resources must lead to more significant programmes in the elimination of illiteracy.*

V. Trends in Europe and North America

It was stated that, in the industrialized world, there is very intensive university-based activity related to literacy. However, there is room for further research and training so that literacy may be perceived as a concept with particular relevance to this context, notably for adult learners and their special needs.

New developments include a greater awareness of literacy itself as reflected in disciplines such as Educational Psychology and Sociology. These, in turn, have considerable effects on teacher training techniques and the emergence of learner-centred approaches.

Specific suggestions for future action included:

- * *some type of review of current teacher training programmes to standardize initiatives regarding literacy for greater impact;*

- * *further research by universities on the teaching carried out by volunteer groups as to the overall effectiveness and adequacy of this important measure;*

- * *more investigation of adult learning in general;*

** involvement by universities in the ongoing dynamic of developing and analyzing the conception and measurement of literacy;*

** the increased promotion of community-based programmes to reach potential literacy students thus rendering the entire issue of community control more important;*

** clarification as to the projects which literacy can serve, since these range from the economic to those based on the issue of social equity and equality of opportunity.*

Thus, the main trends in this region would seem especially focused on adult literacy programmes which require the best possible combination of broad and rigorous academic thinking with the effective communication of this element to the actual practitioners.

VI. Trends in the African Region

For historical reasons, African institutions of higher learning inevitably adopted, at the outset, the European traditions and assumptions of adult education. Under this arrangement, African universities did not consider work in literacy as relevant or challenging or useful, even after the various countries had become independent and free to review the university curriculum and responsibilities.

UNESCO drew the attention of African universities to the possibilities and potentials of involvement in literacy when, in 1964, it established the Institute of African Adult Education at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. Work was introduced in the areas of material preparation, selection of language of instruction, design of teaching methods and mobilization strategies for adult learners.

Since that time, universities have responded to the challenges posed by illiteracy, often in collaboration with governments, but usually working independently, insisting that the participation of ordinary people is vital to their operation.

Efforts have focused on training particularly in relation to adult education which concerns community development and industrial relations. Research has followed automatically as university staff who had a mandate to publish, also appreciated the role of research in nourishing their work. A few of the universities have embarked on direct action in literacy and subsequently in post-literacy, via remedial and functional literacy programmes. Some incursion has also been made regarding the rural areas, the urban poor and women, in an attempt to address some usually forgotten target groups.

The impact of the universities in the advancement of literacy should be considered as a tool for awareness-raising and change. Universities must complement the work of all agencies involved in literacy and, at the same time, provide solutions for deprived learners by means of evolving alternative strategies for development. In this respect, their ability to forge a new and more equitable vision of society is indisputable.

VIII. Suggestions for future action

The participating NGOs and specialists in the general debate proposed, inter alia, the following areas which require further concerted action by all parties concerned with the linkages between the university and literacy.

The responsibilities of the university

Clearly, literacy relates to the intellectual responsibility of the university due to its pertinence for research and the training of teachers. Also, its social obligations are concerned vis-à-vis the context in which the university is situated. To this end, the concept of Study Service is an important way of involving students in community efforts.

Literacy and the managerial effectiveness of universities

Today, universities are often required to justify their existence and to identify their primary vocations. In contexts where literacy is a problem for diverse publics, this can strengthen

an institution's mission and orientation, thus rendering the university a necessary and successful enterprise.

Literacy and interdisciplinarity

Frequently, literacy brings the culture of oral traditions to a wider public. In these cases, disciplines such as Anthropology and Sociology can play a role in the understanding and diffusion of such cultures.

Moreover, fields such as Education, History, Psychology, Statistics and Languages form vital components of literacy training and research. Indeed all of the social sciences have a perspective on a fuller understanding of relevant literacy policy and practice.

Obstacles to literacy

In summary form, these can be listed primarily as attitudes, institutional problems, motivation and funding. While these will require different time frames to resolve, it is useful to recall that the entire higher education community needs to be sensitized to the issues at hand and to identify the part that they can play in providing practical solutions.

Networking and inter-university cooperation

Since many university groups are involved in literacy training and research, networking is an excellent strategy to pool efforts and resources so as to achieve optimal results. Thus, established networks, such as NGOs, can increase their collaboration to promote literacy in different contexts. This cooperation fosters mutual learning and creates a climate where concerned parties are generally better informed about present activities so that fresh initiatives may break new ground.

Impact of new technologies

Given the vastly different range of contexts in which literacy issues are found, the use and impact of new information technologies require close analysis and perhaps re-definition. While an essential learning tool, these must be fully understood in terms of their applicability and effectiveness to varied learning situations.

Lobbying of decision-makers

In any educational system, decision-makers and national authorities must be fully aware of the particular literacy issues present in their immediate context, whether this be industrialized or developing. To this end, the higher education community and the university itself have a vital responsibility in terms of their ability to point out problems and contribute to the solutions. In this respect, there is a need to move from action by concerned individuals to an institution-based approach as this is bound to have greater weight and to achieve more effective results.

VIII. Conclusion

The interest generated by the present Roundtable amongst the higher education community clearly demonstrated that the linkages between the university and literacy are recognized as real and having great potential for solving current problems.

Moreover, it may be seen as a direct follow-up of the *World Conference on Education for All* (Jomtien, 1990) where higher education was encouraged to assume its full social, educational and cultural roles.

In view of these linkages, universities are called upon to:

- * *reinforce*
their research and training capacities in relation to literacy issues;
- * *promote*
collaboration in these fields between concerned academic specialists of all disciplines;
- * *actively participate*
in community projects and international cooperation activities dealing with literacy.

As a result of such action, it is hoped that the university may play its rightful role in the move towards a fully literate world.



FINAL STATEMENT

UNESCO ROUNDTABLE: THE UNIVERSITY AND LITERACY

42nd International Conference on Education, Geneva,
Friday, 7 September 1990

The participants in the Roundtable held during the International Conference on Education and jointly organized by the International Literacy Year Secretariat and the Division of Higher Education and Research of UNESCO within the framework of their collaboration with the Collective Consultation of NGOs on Literacy and the Collective Consultation of NGOs on Higher Education:

- reiterating that International Literacy Year 1990 is an opportunity to renew commitment by all concerned groups to ensuring a fully literate world;
- recalling that literacy and numeracy are basic human rights, constituting a crucial part of the individual's development and social participation;
- considering the need for higher education to address the priority issues of specific social, cultural and economic contexts so as to fully assume its social responsibility and to realize the rich potential of higher education institutions, particularly that of universities;
- recognizing the wide variety of higher education issues which exist in different regions of the world and the necessity to identify suitable solutions including those based on international cooperation;

recommend that the international higher education community, composed of decision-makers, the professoriat, researchers and the student body, should collaborate closely not only amongst themselves but also with UNESCO and other relevant international organizations in order to:

reinforce university research on literacy acquisition, reading and writing achievement, measurement and assessment, languages of instruction and adult literacy provision, as well as on the issue of equality of opportunity and the impact of universities on society;

improve the quality of teacher training both initial and in-service, so as to ensure innovative and effective methodologies designed to promote literacy acquisition;

promote interdisciplinary collaboration across university faculties in the analysis of literacy issues and the formulation of appropriate policies and teaching/learning strategies;

strengthen efforts to promote adult literacy, notably through the training of specialists and tutors, research on appropriate adult learning methods, support for policies and reforms for second chance opportunities and further analysis of the professional prospects of adult learners;

increase the range of out-reach and extension programmes in adult literacy, including basic and worker education, provided by universities.

Conclusion

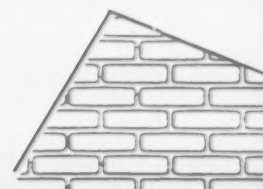
The clear commitment of the higher education community, notably universities, to promote literacy may:

- on one hand emphasize the social and intellectual responsibility of such institutions towards their specific contexts;
- on the other hand constitute a vital component of the overall managerial efficiency of these institutions and their capacities to respond to perceived socio-economic and cultural needs.

Thus concerted efforts involving cooperation between UNESCO, non-governmental organizations and concerned specialists may:

- improve the quality of teaching, research and information exchange with regard to the university and literacy;
- facilitate the specific contribution of universities to a fully literate world.

The participants wish to thank the Director-General of UNESCO for having convened the present Roundtable and would be pleased to cooperate further with regard to proposals related to the university and literacy.



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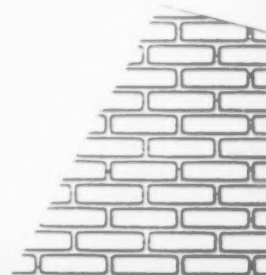
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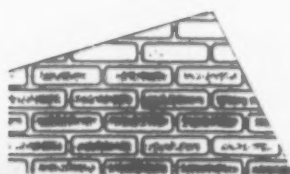
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Literacy is a basic human right and a public responsibility in which all of society has a role to play.

What is the potential of universities to contribute to the promotion of universal literacy?

This volume contains the presentations and debate which took place during an international roundtable on the theme of "Literacy and the role of the university" organized by UNESCO's Division of Higher Education and Research and the International Literacy Year Secretariat during the 42nd Session of the International Conference on Education, Geneva, 7 September 1990.